

ISSUE Nº 11  
JULY/AUG  
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COLLECTOR'S  
EDITION

# DIABOLIQUE™

Kenji Mizoguchi's  
UGETSU MONOGATARI

David Del Valle pays tribute to  
JONATHAN FRID

David Huckvale on  
GOTHIC OPERA

SPECIAL  
COLLECTOR'S  
ISSUE

**DARK  
SHADOWS**

HorrorUnlimited.com





# La Fiancée du Vampire

METRO-GOLDWYN MAYER présente une production DAN CURTIS "LA FIANCÉE DU VAMPIRE" avec JONATHAN FREED et GRAYSON HALL  
avec JOAN BENNETT avec en rôle principal Elizabeth Colville Stockdale  
avec GABRIELLA LORAIN BOOTH • ROBERT MONTGOMERY • JAMES HANCOCK • JOHN HANCOCK • JOHN HANCOCK • JOHN HANCOCK  
Scénario de SAM HILL et GORDON RUSSELL • Produits et mis en scène par DAN CURTIS • METROCOLOR



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# DIABOLIQUE

Issue № 11 Jul/Aug, 2012

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Fiction by Joan Eyles Johnson

I THINK I WAS 15 the first time I saw *And Soon the Darkness*. My brother Jonny and I stumbled upon it late one night and found ourselves engrossed by the eerie emptiness, sinister figures, and quite probably by Terry Nation's name on the credits (it's the old Doctor Who draw). Within a couple of months we found ourselves on a family holiday in Brittany, being driven through the rural Breton countryside, and convincing ourselves that we were in the very locations used in *Darkness*. It is truly amazing how empty the countryside can be, with huge barns, random petrol pumps, the ubiquitous sound of crickets, and the beating sun. Even now, I can still taste it, and recall the unease we created in ourselves (something made even worse after I caught Hammer's *Marnie* a matter of months after that).

For some reason, I hadn't set the VCR that night, and hadn't noted the title; and so the film remained only as a haunting memory, something that existed in my dreams. It must have been another six or seven years before I came across it again and was finally able to enjoy it again.

*And Soon the Darkness* (which David Rattigao pays tribute to on our website), is for me, the highlight in the film career of director Robert Fuest, who died on 21 March at the age of 84. Obituaries and film forums were rightly filled with praise for his work with Vincent Price on *The Abominable Dr Phibes*, and some of his most inventive work was in television, both as a designer and director, but that magical lingering experience of *And Soon the Darkness* has ensured it takes pole position in my affection.

I was fortunate enough to meet and spend a little time with Fuest in 2006 when he was appearing as a guest at the Fantastic Films Weekend in Bradford. Genuinely overawed at the volume of appreciation he was receiving, he was surprisingly humble considering his evident skill. If only more in the industry would follow his example. He will be fondly missed.

Unsurprisingly, Fuest's films have been raked over recently for remake potential, with *Darkness* getting a needless update in 2010. Potentially more interesting are the recent rumours that Tim Burton is set to remake *Dr Phibes* with (who else) Johnny Depp in the Price role. Burton is a bit love-him-or-bate-him for many, but the weird psychedelic influences that played in the original *Phibes* could be well suited to the Burton/Depp team.

Burton's recent re-

working of *Dark Shadows* provided us with the perfect opportunity to look at a franchise that meant virtually nothing to horror fans here in the UK, but which seems to resonate with every American genre fan of a certain age. We simply don't have an equivalent, with our soap operas being fantastical, but not supernatural. I sat through a preview of the film and the audience lapped it up. I see that in the subsequent weeks the film has done okay business, but whether it is enough to kick-start a new franchise, I'm not sure. Let me instead make a recommendation – check out the *Dark Shadows* range of audios at Big-Finish.com and take a chance on one of them. Fans of the old series can pick from lots of David Shelby-starring stories, or *The Night Whispers*, which features Jonathan Frid's final performance as Barnabas Collins.

All this talk of remakes ignites an old bugbear. I don't particularly object to something like *Dark Shadows* being remade (after all, it has had many incarnations already), but clearly defined classics probably shouldn't be touched – *The Omen*, *And Soon the Darkness*, *The Wicker Man*, *Straw Dogs*... I think I'll just revert back to my innocent childhood self, when everything I saw was new. Perfect timing really, as next issue is a special nostalgic examination of childhood horrors. Do share your own memories of the creepy things you saw and read when you were a kid, and join us in September.

Robert  
Editor



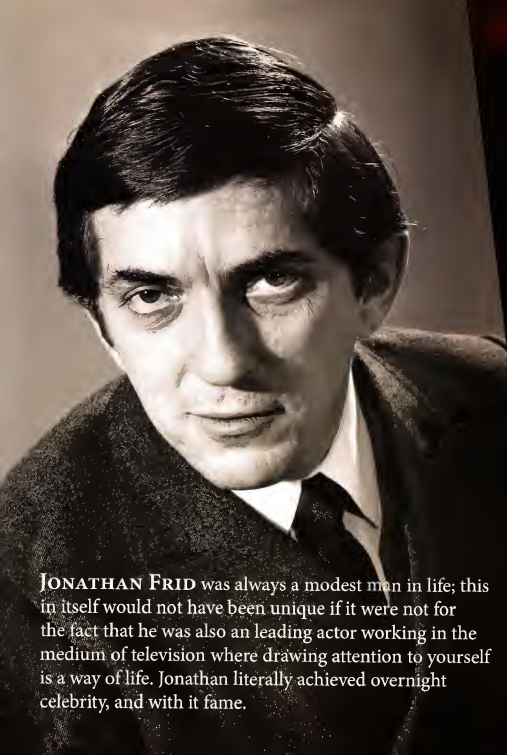
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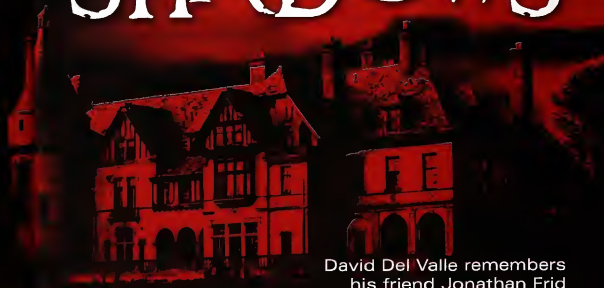
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**JONATHAN FRID** was always a modest man in life; this in itself would not have been unique if it were not for the fact that he was also an leading actor working in the medium of television where drawing attention to yourself is a way of life. Jonathan literally achieved overnight celebrity, and with it fame.

# *The Darkest and Longest of* **SHADOWS**



David Del Valle remembers  
his friend Jonathan Frid

**T**HIS WAS THRUST upon him as he was about to enter middle age, a decidedly unlikely time in life to become a matinee idol. All because he auditioned for a daytime soap opera called *Dark Shadows*; he could not possibly have imagined at the time that within a year of playing this reluctant vampire, Barnabas Collins, he would be a household name across America—a bona fide heart throb receiv-

ing truckloads of fan mail while gracing the covers of teen magazines (magazines that up until that moment had never featured any personalities over the age of 30).

Jonathan Frid began his career as an actor in his native Canada, where his repertoire included Shakespeare and the classics. His manner and delivery of dialogue was old-fashioned and theatrical. This is perhaps the key to his success in the role of Barnabas Collins; his mannerisms suited the character so well that, for those 20 minutes each weekday on tele-

vision, he personified this forlorn figure. A vampire condemned to darkness by a witch, chained in his coffin by his father who could not bring himself to destroy his only son and to top it off carrying a torch for a woman for over two centuries, who leaped to her death on Widow's Hill rather than become a creature like himself. This over ripe plotline as interpreted by a cast of very theatrical actors like Grayson Hall and Louis Edmonds triggered a loyal cult following that has proved to be as undead as Barnabas Col-

**"Legend has it that game show host and part-time actor Bert Conway was being considered when Jonathan Frid was finally chosen to play Barnabas"**

lins and not bloody likely to go away in my lifetime.

The show had run for a year before he joined, but it was Jonathan Frid's performance as the tormented vampire that made the whole thing pull together in the hearts and minds of his captive TV audience. Every baby boomer who rushed home from school in the late sixties to catch the latest instalment of *Dark Shadows* remembers Frid with a special nostalgia if for no other reason than this man was never anything else in the minds of his audience but Barnabas Collins. The hiring of an unknown actor was a spark of genius on whoever presented this bit of casting to Dan

Curtis; legend has it that game show host and part-time actor Bert Conway was being considered when Jonathan

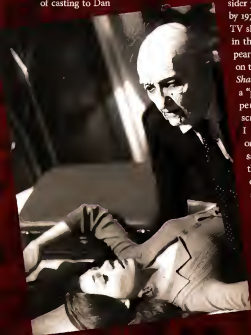
Frid was finally chosen and the rest, as they say, is history.

This lack of ambition on Frid's part was staggering when you consider just how hot an actor he was by 1970, having just come off a hit TV show with a viewing audience in the millions. He agreed to appear in the theatrical feature based on the show called *House of Dark Shadows* which in his opinion was a "pretty good horror film that perhaps spends a bit too much screen time on blood and gore."

I remember when Frid went on the Dick Cavett show and said as much, while remaining the perfect courtly gentleman during the interview as Cavett showed a clip of Frid wildly cane whipping his handy man Willie Loomis—played on both the film and the series by John Karlen. Frid then went on to do just one more horror film in 1974—*Seizure*—which would also

mark the screen debut of a young maverick director named Oliver Stone. His only other television appearance would be in 1973 when he accepted the rather thankless role, in the tradition of say Bela Lugosi in *Night Monster*, playing a mute chauffeur to Shelley Winters' devil worshipping Lillith in *The Devil's Daughter* directed by Jeannot Szwarc.

My first real face-to-face encounter with Jonathan Frid would take place in New York city during the summer of 1983 where he very kindly invited me to his rent-controlled apartment over on East 18th Street, of which he was understandably proud. The first thing you notice about him when you meet him is his absolute lack of vanity regarding his talent as an actor or his celebrity as a TV star, and he is the first to tell you just how lucky he was to become part of the *Dark Shadows* phenomenon. I was very impressed that he kept the cane and ring in display cases in his living room as a constant reminder of his famous alter ego Barnabas Collins. When our interview



Jonathan Frid as the aged Barnabas. From the Ronald V. Borst collection



and visit finally came to an end I left with the feeling that I had made a friend because Jonathan was so generous with his time; it felt like I was there for hours, and not to mention the energy he expended regarding my time with him. I promised to keep in touch and I did. This was so enjoyable for me anyway because I was just like everybody else that grew up watching him stumbling around those cardboard sets with graveyards so cheap the tombstones fell over as Barnabas swooped by in full regalia, with his cape billowing in the mists of ABC's soundstage. He even allowed me to call my mother in Los Angeles while I was there so I could impress her by handing the phone over to "Barnabas." At first she didn't believe me, but after all it was my mother and she knew I had a knack for meeting my idols so she came around and kept him on the phone for ten minutes while she went on about the show and how she never missed an episode. This was a great guy make no mistake.

It would be a few years before I would have a chance to really spend time with him again, this time when Jonathan was touring the country playing the homicidal killer in that wonderful old Broadway warhorse *Arsenic and Old Lace*. He was playing at a theater on Wilshire Boulevard. I managed to get a note to him backstage, and so we met for drinks after his performance at this stylish art deco bar on the corner by the theater. I had invited my close friend Martine Beswicke to join us; unfortunately she was booked for a dinner and asked for a rain check. Jonathan looked disappointed so I suggested that we all meet up at my apartment in Beverly Hills when he had a free afternoon.

This was to be my fondest memory of Jonathan Frid; coming to my house

that afternoon to be reunited with his co-star from *Seizure*, the Queen of Evil herself, Martine Beswicke. Now I took precautions to make sure Jonathan arrived first so we could have some time together to catch up a bit before that double martini personality came through the door delightfully dominating all that follows in her wake. He arrived on time and a bit breathless as he took a cab to my place. I had tried to prepare him for the way my apartment was decorated, and as he entered he looked in on the *Dracula* insert over the mantle (a 1947 reissue from the Lugosi film) and commented, "You know I feel such a connection to this man because I truly understand how playing these kind of parts can affect your entire life if you let it." He wanted to know as much as I had time to tell him about Lugosi and the curse of type-casting that plagued his life until the end. However despite the similarities that Jonathan felt they had, the two of them were in reality night and day because Frid had none of the darkness that tormented Lugosi's life—bad career choices coupled with addictions of drink and drug.

I think the fact that I had organized my apartment in such a manner that it resembled a museum, seemed to establish the right spirit in Jonathan that afternoon; which sparked a renewed respect in his mind for the horror genre; which helped create the right mood for our afternoon together. We decided af-

ter the grand tour of my abode to sit on my patio that faced Oakhurst Drive so we could watch Martine when she drove up in her beloved little black VW she nicknamed "Pearl." When I mentioned this fact to him he laughed that wonderful laugh of his and said, "Nothing that girl comes up with can surprise me David. You forget we all lived together in that drafty old house during our film together." Within minutes Martine arrived, and as she was getting out of her car Jonathan said loudly, "Well there goes the afternoon David, and any chance of a conversation about anything but Beswicke!" He was already treating her like a long lost crazy sister which for me was a sign we were all going to have a ball. Martine is the kind of woman that lights up a room and her joy for living is simply contagious.

Jonathan was in rare form as he recounted days of frustration on the set of *Seizure*, mainly because the crew and the director Oliver Stone were all very young and prone to party a bit too much for the taste of an established pro like Frid. This project was a work in progress or a "love in" depending on what day you worked, Martine recalled having to keep the cameraman sober by making love to him on occasion, to which Jonathan laughed and said, "Better you than me that's all I can say." I wish I had somehow taped the whole afternoon, but then that would not have been fair to these two amazing people who discussed their time together with candor and honesty and this must remain between friends.

I did make an effort to keep in touch with Jonathan as time seemed to slip away and after a fashion I was told Jonathan gave up his beloved New York apartment to return to Canada, as I believe his mother had died leaving her estate in



*"Martine Beswicke recalled having to keep the cameraman sober by making love to him on occasion"*



his hands. The Frid family was already very established there and he wanted to go home after so many years on the road. Theater was always his first love and he delighted in touring with his one man shows giving readings of his favorite plays and short stories.

My *Dark Shadows* memories will always be very dear to me because I was more than a fan of the show. I was also part of the "*Dark Shadows* family" [David produced the show's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary TV tribute special, *Ed!*]. When the news finally reached me that Jonathan Frid had died it was not surprising because of his age, yet Jonathan had achieved in his lifetime the kind of celebrity usually reserved for a Christopher Lee or a Bela Lugosi. He was not only an icon in the world of daytime television, but an influential horror icon as well. Jonathan had been a working actor for nearly 20 years when the role of Barnabas Collins turned him into a legend, and that he will always remain. I was thrilled that he lived to see his legacy secure with boxed sets of all 1200 episodes of *Dark Shadows* in circulation (and a sell-out on top of that at nearly \$700 a piece!). He flew to England a year before he died to film a cameo in the new Tim Burton film of *Dark Shadows*, which he nearly lived to see in theaters.

I know he would have been rather embarrassed by all this media attention by fans and colleagues alike regarding his passing but I am here to tell you he deserved every tribute bestowed upon him. Because it is in fact an outpouring of love for this decidedly humble man who entertained a generation of baby boomers and seems to be well on his way to repeat this process for the 21st century as well. I loved this man to bits and while I shall miss him, Jonathan Frid cannot die as long as the visual arts exists in its many forms; his legacy is firmly in place and he remains as immortal as the character he played to perfection on both screens. Farewell Barnabas Collins—I just know you will be back!

by David Del Valle

**Jonathan Frid**  
(2 December 1924 – 13 April 2012)



Jonathan Frid as Barnabas. From the Ronald V. Borst collection



## REMEMBERING KANETO SHINDÔ (1912–2012)

**K**ANETO SHINDÔ, ONE of the world's more daring and gifted filmmakers, died on May 29, 2012; he was 100 years old. His death marks the end of one of the more interesting and productive careers in world cinema. However, thanks to recent DVD and Blu-ray releases of some of Shindô's most important works, cinephiles will undoubtedly continue to discover the works of this arguably underrated *auteur* for years to come.

Born in Hiroshima, Japan, on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1912, Kaneto Shindô is probably best known for three extremely successful and visually provocative films: *The Naked Island* (1961), *Onibaba* (1964), and *Kuroneko* (1968). In each of these works, Shindô places socially marginalized characters within extraordinary, and at times supernatural, scenarios. In *The Naked Island*, for example, Shindô weaves a poetic narrative around the arduous struggles of a family who just happen to be the sole occupants of a small Japanese island. This socially conscious approach to filmmaking extends even to his darkest, more genre-based productions. In his horror films *Onibaba* and *Kuroneko*, women suffer at the hands of, and occasionally exact violence upon, characters coded as patriarchal and militaristic. That said, Shindô skillfully manipulates viewer sympathies by investing his strong female characters with complex psychological and socio-cultural motivations that render even their most heinous and violent acts every bit as heart-rending as they are abhorrent. Shindô, in other words, re-

fuses to reduce the women at the core of *Onibaba* and *Kuroneko* to simplistic depictions of vengeful entities that can be easily dismissed as reiterations of a "monstrous feminine." Indeed, this focus on powerful female characters links Shindô's cinematic vision with that of his aesthetic mentor, Kenji Mizoguchi, as do many of the most palpably humanistic moments in Shindô's works.

A self-professed socialist, Shindô frequently critiques social injustices, yet he does so in a way that adroitly avoids succumbing to the morass of clichéd symbolism and heavy-handed didacticism that often subverts such artistic agendas. What's more, in his most beautifully compositions and sequence shots, Shindô, like Mizoguchi, "directs" his audience's vision, guiding *where* and *how* we look with as much precision as his direction of actors and technicians.

In a career spanning seven decades, Kaneto Shindô remained a remarkably productive director, helming his 45<sup>th</sup> and final feature film, *Postcards*, in 2010. As a writer, Shindô was even more prolific, authoring over 150 screenplays across an array of genres. From his earliest years as a member of Shinkô Kinema's celluloid development department, through his years as a screenwriter at the Shôchiku Film Company, Kaneto Shindô fostered sophisticated notions of the screenplay as perhaps the primary component of cinema as an art form. For Shindô, the screenplay was absolutely instrumental to a film's look and feel at virtually every stage of its production. This preoccupation with the dynamics of storytelling pervades Shindô's cinematic output.

Additionally, the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima greatly impacted Shindô's development as a socially conscious artist. Hiroshima was the place of his birth; its tragic legacy seared itself into the very fabric of Shindô's personal and professional life. Consequently, he maintained very close, if at times emotionally painful, connections with the city; several of Shindô's films, such as 1951's *Children of Hiroshima* and 1959's *Lucky Dragon No. 5*, take the dropping of the atomic bomb and the (quite literally) toxic consequences of U.S. military imperialism as fundamental to their respective narratives.

One of the most fascinating and memorable aspects of Kaneto Shindô's directorial and cinematographic style is his ability to present the content of his films in a compelling and seductive fashion that lures spectators into confronting difficult and, at times, unpleasant motifs – from abject poverty to the lingering effects of personal and national traumas. Where in lesser hands such complex and bleak material might have easily transformed into banal melodrama, under Kaneto Shindô's direction the resulting films were invariably complex. In this regard, Shindô's oeuvre, like the collective output of many of cinema's greatest artists, transcends historical specificity and the base materiality of social relations. He advances ways of viewing the world that render even the most culturally specific conflicts accessible to global audiences receptive to pondering the nexus of emotional drives informing the vast majority of human relationships.

by Jay McRoy  
University of Wisconsin



## EVEN THE GHOSTS ARE HAUNTED

*UGETSU MONOGATARI* occupies an important place in Kenji Mizoguchi's oeuvre, but the film is perhaps best known for its depiction of the incursion of supernatural forces upon the narrative's otherwise largely naturalistic characters and setting. Most of the work's more fantastic components constellate about the ghostly and entrancing figure of Lady Wakasa. Her spectral presence seduces and haunts the ambitious Genjurô, one of the film's two central male protagonists.

One could argue, however, that her unsettling visage has figuratively haunted this masterpiece of world cinema since its release in 1953, especially in terms of the film's reception. To this day, most people writing on *Ugetsu* gravitate towards the work's otherworldly elements, and it is not unusual to see the film categorized as a ghost story (or *kaidan*), or to find it referred to as one of the most important and influential films in the history of Japanese horror cinema. While compelling arguments can be, and have been, advanced to support these claims, classifications of this sort run the risk of neglecting *Ugetsu*'s complexity. Consequently, reading the film through such lenses reduces Mizoguchi's otherwise expansive meditation on human desires and relationships in a war-ravaged society, simplifying the film to a story of soul-threatening enchantment and exorcism.

Kenji Mizoguchi's **UGETSU MONOGATARI**



Kenji Mizoguchi (left)

**B**ORN IN TOKYO IN 1898, Kenji Mizoguchi spent much of his formative years living in severe poverty and watching as his family struggled with myriad health and economic difficulties. In order to help keep the family from utter destitution, Mizoguchi's sister, Suzo, became a geisha. This development, combined with his father's often hostile and destructive behavior, profoundly impacted Mizoguchi's perspective towards the paradoxically powerful and fragile nature of familial bonds during times of crisis, as well as the social potential of acts of sacrifice and redemption. These hardships, and the emotions connected with them, inevitably informed Mizoguchi's artistic output, especially when producers encouraged him to create films about female characters living in difficult, if not outright desperate, circumstances. The theme of women struggling to survive in a patriarchal culture infuses many of his initial cinematic triumphs, like 1936's *Sisters of Gion* and *Osaka Elegy*, and his sublime 1939 film *The Story of Late Chrysanthemums*. This aesthetic and socio-political preoccupation with class, gender and sex inequalities would become a recurring motif in his work.

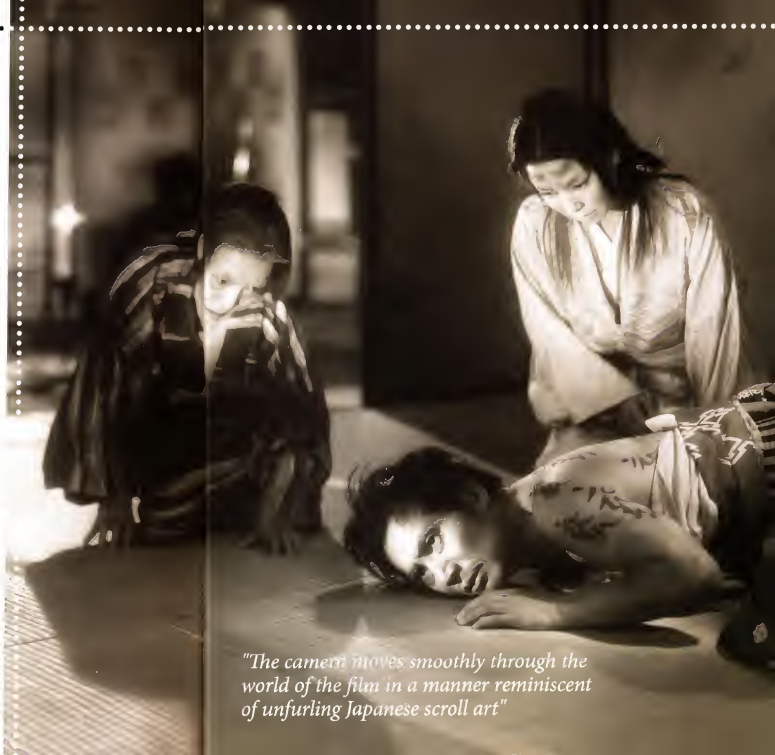
By the time that *Ugetsu* was released in 1953, Kenji Mizoguchi had become internationally recognized as one of cinema's most important directors. He was ardently admired by Akira Kurosawa, whose post-war films frequently competed directly with those of his esteemed elder. His inimitable style also resonated powerfully with an emerging generation of film critics weaned on André Bazin's championing of realism in cinema, as well as the cult of personality that would eventually coalesce into what we know today as *auteur* theory. The critics (and eventual filmmakers) of the popular French film journal *Cahiers du Cinema*, for instance, regarded Mizoguchi with the same mixture of enthusiasm and reverence they reserved for distinctive visionaries like Jean Renoir and Alfred Hitchcock. In his essay

"Mizoguchi Viewed from Here," Jacques Rivette goes so far as to declare the Japanese director a master in the "art of modulation" (Rivette, 265) as well as a director whose technical rigor and distinctive approach to narrative cinema transcended cultural and linguistic barriers.

In other words, although Mizoguchi's characters convey their thoughts and hardships in what Rivette labels an "alien tongue," the films themselves, Rivette (264) writes, talk to us in a familiar language. What language? The only one to which a film-maker should lay claim when all is said and done: the language of *mise en scène*... If music is a universal idiom, so too is *mise en scène*: it is this language, and not Japanese, that has to be learned to understand 'Mizoguchi.'

Mizoguchi's films' dominant syntax, if we follow Rivette's lead, comprises extended takes, carefully arranged compositions and masterfully choreographed crane and tracking shots that allow the camera to move smoothly through the world of the film in a manner reminiscent of unfurling Japanese scroll art, or *kakejiku*. Largely eschewing the shot-reverse shot logic of classical continuity editing, Mizoguchi favors protracted sequence shots that continue until cutting becomes an absolute necessity, thereby putting forth an aesthetic that mirrors the fluid transience of human experience.

As one of Mizoguchi's later works,



"The camera moves smoothly through the world of the film in a manner reminiscent of unfurling Japanese scroll art"

*Ugetsu* offers spectators a window through which they can observe a gifted visual artist and storyteller operating at the height of his powers. Mizoguchi based *Ugetsu* on three short fictions. The first two were "The House in the Thicket" and "The Serpent's Lust"—translations, or retellings, of Chinese tales of the macabre by the popular Japanese author Akinari Ueda. The third source was "How He Got the Legion of Honor," penned by the French prose master Guy de Maupassant.

A critical and commercial success upon its release, *Ugetsu* was the second of three films to win Mizoguchi major prizes at the Venice Film Festival between 1952 and 1954. It followed the triumph of his internationally acclaimed *The Life of Oharu* (1952), which offered a harrowing depiction of a woman's struggle against prejudice and masculine authority, and anticipated the remarkable *Sansho the Ballfish* (1954), a motion picture steeped in motifs of sacrifice and redemption. By grounding each of these narratives within a painstakingly detailed recreation of Japan's feudal past, Mizoguchi explores the ethical and human cost of militarism, nationalism, avarice and hubris. These concerns, far from ensconced within the sarcophagus of historical specificity, res-

onated powerfully with Japanese and international audiences recovering from the dehumanizing brutality of the Second World War. In Japan, the losses incurred during the war had a particularly devastating impact upon the national psyche, and this trauma was foremost in Mizoguchi's mind as he crafted *Ugetsu*. Specifically, Mizoguchi sought to articulate the suffering of common people caught up in an armed conflicts over which they had no control and through which they are compelled to find a way to live their lives as best they can.

This struggle to endure the chaos of a nation at war underlies *Ugetsu's* plot, which follows the exploits of two poor but ambitious artisans—Genjurō, a humble potter with a desire for wealth, and Tōbei, Genjurō's somewhat bumbling assistant who dreams of becoming a samurai—and their wives, Miyagi and Ohama. Given Mizoguchi's predilection for directing narratives that espouse the tribulations of women spiraling (often downwards) within a cultural maelstrom of masculine power and privilege, the suffering Genjurō and Tōbei's wives endure as a result of their husbands' narcissistic aspirations may seem like a reiteration of previously articulated concerns. Like his European

contemporary, Ingmar Bergman, Mizoguchi possessed the uncanny ability to render palpably the lives of women driven to emotional and physical extremes. His heroines are strong if frequently tragic characters, but their struggles are often inextricably linked to the whims of the various men they encounter. Accordingly, interrogating the motivations informing the behavior of the male protagonists in Mizoguchi's films reveals much about the ideologies he critiques. In *Ugetsu*, viewers bear witness to the devastating consequences of men who, struggling to adhere to gender expectations, make impulsive decisions with little regard as to how these actions will impact the lives of their closest family members. Both Genjurō and Tōbei, haunted by their individual illusions as to what constitutes an idealized masculinity, adopt personas that conform to the model of male behavior that they have been socialized to revere.

In their attempts to salve the sting of unfulfilled aspirations and assuage the nagging ache of profound insecurities, Genjurō and Tōbei rupture the cohesion of their respective families. While selling their wares at a crowded local market, Genjurō and Tōbei abandon their wives for the opportunity to enhance their indi-

vidual (and, by extension, their families') social status. Tōbei spies samurai in splendid armor walking through the market and, inspired by the power and virility that these highly skilled warriors represent to him, purchases the best armor he can afford. He then sets out on a series of misadventures that serendipitously culminate in his steady, if somewhat comical, ascension in the ranks and esteem of his fellow soldiers. It is only after he discovers that his wife has been reduced to working in a brothel that he realizes the folly of his ways and abandons his militaristic pretensions.

Genjurō's quest, however, assumes a more complex and considerably darker trajectory. When the beautiful and noble Lady Wakasa, accompanied by one of her servants, purchases a piece of pottery that she wishes delivered to Kutsuki mansion, Genjurō senses his opportunity for upward mobility. Enchanted by the image of idealized femininity Lady Wakasa represents for him, Genjurō quickly becomes enamored with the seductive and quietly ethereal woman who, unlike the classic *onryo* (vengeful spirit) of Japanese folklore and *kabuki* theatre, does not seek vengeance upon those who wronged her while she was alive. Lady Wakasa does

not appear to pose an immediate threat to Genjurō. He remains by Lady Wakasa's side when he learns of the massacre that decimated the inhabitants of her crumbling manor, and even after he discovers that Lady Wakasa's deceased father haunts the decaying residence. Genjurō is so entranced by her nobility and gentle bearing that he agrees to marry her and remain forever by her side. Only after a Buddhist priest adamantly warns Genjurō that Lady Wakasa is in fact a *yurei* (restless spirit) does he decide to perform the exorcism necessary to break her spell over him.

Borrowing conceits from *Noh* theatre, like the makeup that pales Lady Wakasa's face and the dance she performs for her spellbound guest, the supernatural and almost dream-like sequences at Kutsuki Mansion contrast with the film's more overtly realistic moments. This vacillation between the portrayal of a lyrical, highly stylized fantasy realm and a more



"Mizoguchi's concerns resonated powerfully with audiences recovering from the dehumanizing brutality of the Second World War"



overtly representational depiction of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Japan is perhaps one of *Ugetsu*'s most remarkable elements. Not only do these smooth transitions further differentiate Genjurō and Tōbei's parallel quests to escape perceived barriers to their potential within class and gender hierarchies, but they also illustrate Mizoguchi's extraordinary range as a filmmaker. This is especially evident when one considers the ease with which Mizoguchi transitions between these divergent visual styles without disrupting or otherwise calling undue attention to the film's tonal modulations. In other words, Mizoguchi successfully maneuvers the viewer through stylistically disparate narrative threads without jeopardizing the work's integrity as a single piece of humanist cinema.

This visual distinction between the world of the living and the liminal spaces occupied by the ghostly Lady Wakasa is perhaps best illustrated by Mizoguchi's brilliant juxtaposition of two extended sequence shots. In the first of these, Genjurō and Lady Wakasa, framed in an extreme long shot, enjoy each other's company in an idyllic landscape that could easily pass as a cinematographic reproduction of an *ukiyo-e* (floating world) woodblock print, a genre of graphic art defined by its portrayal of the natural world as always already temporary, inconstant and fleeting. The implication of transience that such an

image calls forth is appropriate given the theme of impermanence woven throughout *Ugetsu*. Additionally, there is an intentional air of artificiality to the sequence, as if we are not seeing the world as it really is, but rather the world as Genjurō wishes it to be. Stylized (and perhaps subjectivized) to the point of allegory, this ideal, bucolic moment immediately precedes one of the film's most disturbing events. In an intricate tracking shot, the camera follows Miyagi (Genjurō's seemingly forgotten wife) as she tries to make her way down a dirt road in a forest near her hometown. Suddenly besieged by marauding soldiers, Miyagi struggles to save herself and the life of her son, who remains strapped to her back throughout the assault. In a long shot that keeps us at a precarious remove from the action, she is stabbed and left to die on the side of the road. Her suffering is protracted and palpable. Her fingers claw futilely at the earth as the soldiers depart; her heart-rending screams of agony and despair mingle with the cries of the child on her back. This juxtaposition of powerful sequence shots is indicative of *Ugetsu*'s vacillation between intervals of heightened formalism and stretches of social realism/humanism. Furthermore, such visual and tonal collisions reinforce the recurring motif of abandoned women left to fend for themselves in brutal, masculinist cultures, as well as Mizoguchi's

concerns surrounding the ruinous impact of war on those least involved in the political skirmishes.

Perhaps *Ugetsu*'s most memorable sequence, however, occurs relatively early in the film. In a series of beautifully executed shots designed to evoke a sense of unease and telegraph the film's impending supernatural components, Genjurō and Tōbei's families are depicted crossing a body of fog-enshrouded water so that they can sell their pottery at market. As they move over the lake, they encounter a second—apparently unplotted—vessel. Upon closer examination, they discover that the ship's lone occupant is a frail, mortally wounded man who uses his last breaths to warn of murderous pirates. If one were to classify *Ugetsu* as a *kaidan*, such an exchange could be interpreted as a genre convention foreshadowing the potential dangers awaiting our protagonists. And, in this case, such a reading would by no means be precipitous. Each of the boat's passengers eventually meets with a variably tragic end that forever alters the trajectory of their life and the lives of their loved ones, and this occurs despite Genjurō's attempt to ensure his wife and child's safety by forcing them ashore. However, if we further expand our analysis of this mist-laden crossing, understanding it not simply as a genre convention pregnant with ill portent, but rather as an event that literalizes the film's theme of the transience of all things, a wider and more rewarding understanding of Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu* steadily comes into focus. Enveloped by a dense, obscuring mist, the boats and the murky water upon which they float function as an interstitial space that effectively severs the remainder of the film from the coherent period locales in which Mizoguchi sets the narrative's action, and to which he returns, albeit in an uncanny fashion, in the film's final scenes.

This mist through which Genjurō pilots his craft is one through which even we—as spectators—are required to peer in order to gain a modicum of clarity and spatio-temporal orientation. It is also arguably *Ugetsu*'s richest and most durable





*"Her fingers claw futilely at the earth as the soldiers depart; her heart-rending screams of agony and despair mingle with the cries of the child on her back"*

metaphor. The lasting power of Mizoguchi's celebrated film resides in its insights into humanity's struggle to find satisfaction and value in an evanescent world in which cultures too often impose impossible demands based on gender and class inequality. *Ugetsu*, then, is a profound, and profoundly moving, examination of the illusions to which we adhere in the face of oppression and impermanence. In this sense, Mizoguchi's film, in both its supernatural and more overtly representational moments, is about the power of illusion. While very much a foundational component of the culture Genjurō and Tōbei inhabit, the gender codes that these men see as compulsory are ultimately social constructions that help perpetuate a larger, ever more pervasive ideology surrounding the performance of masculinity and femininity. These illusions haunt the characters, and it is perhaps within these illusions that *Ugetsu*'s true horrors reside, for it is Genjurō and Tōbei's surrender to these illusions that ultimately tears their families asunder. Genjurō and Tōbei's illusions haunt their wives in a very direct, material way, as the abandoned women find themselves increasingly debased. Miyagi and Ohama, in other words, are the objects of, and hence repeatedly subject to, their spouse's sexist projections. In this sense, they are almost as fantastical as Lady Wakasa, *Ugetsu*'s iconic paranormal figure.

Even in death, the spectral Lady Wakasa is haunted by the spirit of her warrior father. Like her, the characters that populate *Ugetsu* wander through a transitional realm, performing the only identities they know how to perform and struggling to remain adaptable in the society that all too often erects seemingly intractable social edifices in the face of inevitable and unavoidable transformations.

by Jay McRoy

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# COLLINWOOD CALLING

## The Life of Dark Shadows

For many in the US, *Dark Shadows* was an institution. A strange fusion of Gothic horror and soap opera that lived on long after the original television show came to an end. Tim Burton's recent reworking of the series for the big screen has opened the franchise up to a new generation, and a global audience on an unprecedented scale.



the night-time air, the gallons of coffee drunk, and my growing sense of outsidership all came together in the hours after midnight and I got sucked into the peculiar world of Collinwood.

With over a thousand episodes having been made of the original tv series, I don't expect many of you will have viewed it from start to finish. I haven't yet. For me, *Dark Shadows* was experienced like many people's experience of soaps—dipping in and out of the run, following aspects of plot-arcs, and being baffled by others. A sort of surrealistic interaction, which only increased my attraction; something which Burton has evidently also found attractive.



sions of ghosts, which is written off by others as indication of his mental instability. Another six months later and Jonathan Frid made his debut on the show, after which point the series grew in popularity and diversified into a true Gothic horror soap. Barnabas is unleashed from his imprisonment and comes to the Collinwood mansion in the guise of a long-lost relative from England, and his vampiric inclinations kept audiences rapt.

Soap operas have always excelled in their hyper-realism, fanciful flights of narrative which see characters come and go, actors change, and if the soaps I grew up watching are anything to go by, every disaster that could befall a city occurring in one tiny street, or one tiny family! *Dark Shadows* pushed the suspension of disbelief into the stratosphere. Making full use of their fantastic credentials, they pre-



## New Moon

THE LATE JONATHAN Frid's portrayal of Barnabas Collins, the troubled vampire of Collinwood, became synonymous with the *Dark Shadows* brand following his arrival on the show, but when the series began on network ABC in June 1966, the supernatural elements that have come to define the brand were completely absent. The Gothic melodrama centred on Victoria Winters (Alexandra Moltke), an orphaned girl who comes to the Collinwood mansion to find out more about her own mysterious past.

Collinwood came complete with a dysfunctional pre-teen, (David, as played by David Henesy), a stern matriarch, Elizabeth (Joan Bennett), and their handyman, Willie Loomis (John Karlen). Gothic narratives seem to work best when they come complete with dark, imposing, crumbling mansions, and a troubled (inbred?), fallen, semi-aristocratic family. The generations of wealth and history, isolation, and castle-like protective surroundings demand a crowd of torch-wielding villagers, or at very least, a television audience of millions.

It would be six months into the show's run before ghosts got their first mention. Young David was prone to vi-

PRIOR TO THE release of Burton's *Dark Shadows* most of my British friends would stare at me with blank expressions any time I mentioned the show. Even now I suspect their appreciation is going to be rather clouded by the beautiful but strange workings of Depp *et al*. Unlike other US soaps (*Dallas*, *Dynasty*, anything oily), *Dark Shadows* didn't find an outlet here in the UK, not until the mid-1990s when the Sci Fi Channel started airing it in the small hours. As an impressionable teenager I found myself regularly working on my art coursework while watching this strange, eerie drama. The combination of



Both played Jonathan Frid as Barnabas Collins. From the Barnaby Rudge collection



sented audiences with a theme park experience. Vampires, ghosts, witches, possession, time-travel (yes! I did say time-travel), parallel universes, reincarnation, and the central dysfunctional protagonists. The Addams Family wouldn't even come close...

Dan Curtis claimed that the original concept for the show came to him in a dream—the image of a girl on a train—but it would be fleshed out with the help of Art Wallace, who wrote the show's bible and the first rack of episodes. For the introduction of many of the more supernatural elements and the anti-hero status of Barnabas Collins, we have writer Sam Hall to thank.

The show ran until 1971, when television politics hammered its own stake into this living monster. Established mythology says that the decision to kill off the show came down to demographics. While the show was achieving strong ratings, and was very profitable considering the low budget spend per episode, the bulk of the audience was perceived to be teenagers, fresh home from school. And





teenagers simply didn't influence the purchases made by house-holders. For advertising, it was better to have a show that would attract the women in the house, rather than their offspring. 1,225 half hours into the run, *Dark Shadows* disappeared, in April 1971.

## Crescent Moon

THE POTENTIAL FOR *Dark Shadows* to live beyond the small screen had already been envisioned by Curtis. While the series was still on the air, Curtis embarked on a feature film, based around the Barnabas storyline, which would be released in September 1970 as *House of Dark Shadows*.

Originally, Curtis planned to edit together material from the TV show for the feature, but soon abandoned the idea in order to create a stand-alone feature.



Budgeted at \$750,000, and shot over 8 weeks, the film was successful. Taking many of the most popular cast members from the television series out of the show for the period of production was a bold move. The soap took a ratings dive during the absence, but emerged relatively healthy at the end.

For anyone who has never seen *Dark Shadows* before, *House of Dark Shadows* isn't a bad place to start, I guess. The film sets up the premise of the crumbling Collinwood mansion and its assortment of strange inhabitants, the troubled child David, and Barnabas—the vampire, unexpectedly disturbed from his vault by handyman Willie Loomis. Barnabas ingratiates himself with the family by pretending to be a lost relative from England, and the family is struck by both his knowledge and physical resemblance to a portrait of the original Barnabas—who supposedly left Collinwood for England in the 1790s. We're also introduced to Dr Julia Hoffman (played, as in the TV series, by Grayson Hall, wife of the show's writer, Sam Hall).

While Barnabas becomes enamoured with Maggie Evans, David's governess, owing to her resemblance to Barnabas' long-lost lover Josette, Hoffman discovers his vampire affliction and sets about trying to cure him. That is, until she falls for him too; gets jealous, tries to come between Barnabas and Maggie, and is soon killed.

The film builds up (in a richly complicated mix of affairs, and psychoanalytical ponderings) to a showdown between Barnabas and Jeff—Maggie's boyfriend—and Barnabas's death, via a stake.

Condensing four years of plotting into 100 minutes was never going to be an easy task, but the basic elements of



this storyline would provide the blueprint for future adaptations, as we'll soon see. For me, rich as it is in shadow, the film lacks the special 'other' quality that made the television series so captivating. Perhaps ironically, it is the increase in budget which diminishes the performance. The small screen is all about little gestures, and close-ups of faces, and emotion laid bare. The vast spaces of the house (shot around the Lyndhurst Estate, in Tarrytown, New York) overwhelm the cast, and the acoustics of the location shoots are rather harsh. Not to forget the rather drab colour palette that blights both this and *Night of Dark Shadows*.

Fans and critics alike have for years hailed *Dark Shadows* as 'camp', with a knowing reference to the sexual preferences of members of the cast and crew, but this is lazy shorthand (the same lazy shorthand that uses the word in reference to the Corman Poe pictures, or the Hammer films of the 1960s). Where *Dark Shadows* is camp is in its use of theatricality, and stage presentation. The television show was over-the-top and exaggerated, and some of that stylisation comes through to the films.

The character of young David seems overlooked here, as he is undoubtedly interesting and more complex than many of the other members of the family. His persistence and ability to see what others cannot ultimately drives them towards understanding of Barnabas' affliction.



Tom Burton in the premiere of *Dark Shadows* (1970)

Huge chunks of the iconography and set pieces seem lifted from classic *Dracula* adaptations, and with your protagonist a vampire, how can they not be. Willie Loomis is an Igor-like figure, set about to do the master's will. The revival of Carolyn (Nancy Barrett) after Barnabas has killed her is a straight lift of Lucy from Hammer's 1958 *Dracula*, down to her attacking the young relative (David Collins here, Janina Faye in *Dracula*). Even the blood transfusion is something tried out in the various *Dracula* narratives, as a way to get rid of the 'infection'. The staking climax, another *Dracula* lift, provides a rather depressing, alternative ending for Barnabas, reducing him to a two-dimensional character rather than the rich, complex figure Hall devised for the television run.

## Half Moon

THE SUCCESS OF *House of Dark Shadows* was enough to convince distributor MGM to finance a second feature, provisionally entitled *Curse of Dark Shadows*, and intended as a direct sequel to the first feature. With leading man Jonathan Frid unwilling to resurrect the role of Barnabas over typecasting fears, Sam Hall and Dan

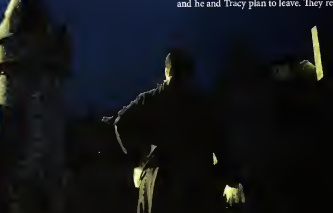


Curtis set about a new storyline based loosely on the alternative timeline established in the television series.

Artist Quentin Collins (David Selby) and wife Tracy (Kate Jackson) move into the newly inherited Collinwood mansion, looked after by the eerie housekeeper, Carlotta (another turn from Grayson Hall). Quentin soon finds himself subject to strange hallucinations and a gradual possession by his cruel ancestor Charles Quentin, and haunted by the ghost of Charles' lover, Angelique.

Charles' influence grows, aided by Carlotta, and in spite of warnings from his writer friends, Quentin turns on his wife, attempting to kill her. Eventually, Quentin breaks free of the spell, and Carlotta huris herself from the balcony of Collinwood, killing herself and breaking the curse...

Quentin puts the house up for sale, and he and Tracy plan to leave. They re-





turn to the house one last time to retrieve Quentin's canvases, only to find Charles once again in full possession of Quentin's body, and Angelique reincarnated in the flesh...

Frid or no Frid, *Night* suffers from taking the also-rans from the *Dark Shadows* television version and excluding many of the firm favourites. With the television show off the air by the time that *Night* went into production, they should have had the freedom to be creative and expand the *Dark Shadows* mythology, and build upon the success of the earlier feature. And yet, with the only continuity seeming to be in the presence of Grayson Hall, and the Lyndhurst mansion location, *Night* fails to build on *House* and becomes simply another eerie haunted house film.

The first half is overly bright, lacking the claustrophobia offered by night-time. When night does come, it brings terror, uncertainty and spectres. The final half hour is played in almost total darkness, but rather too much darkness; darkness of light, and darkness of plot.

Some have suggested that the studio's insistence that over a half hour of the film be trimmed before release was a major contributing factor to the slightly incoherent plottings. Certainly in the version made available on home video, there are some very obvious cuts which jar. The entire closing minutes, where two of the characters are killed off-screen and their

deaths related via an onscreen news feed, was cheap and at odds with the general tone.

The house itself is clearly the channel for the various possessions, but this isn't really a film about Collinwood; rather this is a bizarre, centuries-old love story. The cast do well enough with the material, but I can't really recommend it.

## Full Moon

**V**ARIOUS ATTEMPTS were made to revive the *Dark Shadows* brand, but it wouldn't be until 1991 that MGM and Dan Curtis had another stab at it. Cut prematurely short, thanks to scheduling problems during the first Gulf War, and in spite of healthy audience reception and viewing figures, the 12 episodes that make up the 1991 'revival' series are strong enough to be viewed today. I'd go so far as to say that, in this day and age of shows like *True Blood*, it is a damn shame that *Dark Shadows* was let to go when it did.

The revival series, known onscreen as simply *Dark Shadows*, basically reboots the franchise. The two-hour pilot episode is heavily based on *House of Dark Shadows* (swatches of dialogue are virtually identical), and the rest of the series fills out the rest. Basically, this is the story of Barnabas' (Ben Cross) awakening by Willie Loomis (Jim Fyfe), the arrival of

Victoria Winters (Joanna Going), and Dr Hoffman's attempts to change Barnabas back into a human being, leading up to Victoria's time-travelling back to witness Barnabas' transformation into a vampire.

The 1991 series is slick, dark, moody and immensely enjoyable. With space to breathe, unlike the condensed version present in *House*. The cast combines Hollywood lovelies with sterling British performers—Jean Simmons, Barbara Steele and Ben Cross. The presence of so many Brits among the Collinwood residents gives this a real international flavour, and also emphasises the 'otherness' of the family for American audiences. Hollywood shorthand, certainly, but no less effective.

Ben Cross has big shoes to fill, and succeeds in reinventing Barnabas for a new generation. His rather bouffant hairdo aside, he manages to run the gamut of emotions, bringing pathos, enchantment, and fear in equal measure. Bizarrely, Cross is pretty much the same age as Frid was when he took on the role, but he looks about ten years younger. Certainly his relationship with Victoria is much more believable here. Steele also makes for a more human Hoffman.

## Waxing Gibbous

**T**HE EARLY DEMISE of the new *Dark Shadows* was a universal disappointment, pre-empting as it did, the influx of supernatural dramas like *X-Files*, *Buffy*, *Supernatural*, *True Blood*, *Being Human* and so on. You have to give it to Curtis—he was visionary.

Interest in the brand never went away, with a script written by Steele and Curtis for a new mini-series to wrap up the events of the 1991 revival; and then in 2004 Warner Brothers produced a pilot episode for another incarnation of the show. Scottish actor Alec Newman (a sprightly 29 years old at the time) took over the Barnabas role, with Marley Shelton as Victoria. A sexy, young *Dark Shadows* for a new generation. Although well received, the pilot was not finished, and has never aired. Only the lucky few who have attended certain *Dark Shadows* con-



ventions have had the privilege.

In 2006, British-based Big Finish Productions started work on an acclaimed series of original *Dark Shadows* audios which continue to this day. Both a series of audio plays, and dramatized readings (there is a subtle difference, lost on most of us, I fear), have been produced, and they continue to expand the *Dark Shadows* universe, largely around David Selby's Quentin Collins, along with various other names from the television series. 2010's *The Night Whispers* brought Jonathan Frid out of retirement, and he played Barnabas for the first time in some 40 years, to John Karlen's Loomis. His voice aged, Barnabas has long since returned to human form, and is now being haunted by the ghost of Celeste—a woman Barnabas maltreated in his youth. Celeste is played by the 1991 revival's Barbara Steele, and so distinctive is her voice you can be forgiven for thinking she was back as Hoffman. It's a rather nice bit of drama, with a feeling of warmth between Loomis and the former taskmaster, and a good place to jump into the series.

## New Moon

**A**ND WHILE Big Finish expand on the established, Tim Burton has brought us about full circle with his recent big screen version of the show. There will be

those who lament the use of Johnny Depp as Barnabas and the recasting of classic roles, but as we've seen, there are no fixed rules in the *Dark Shadows* universe. Actors come and go, characters evolve; and at any given moment the whole thing can be shaken up like an etch-a-sketch and given another go.

The Gothic sensibilities of the Burton team resulted in a rich production design, which gave substance to Collinwood, and an even more eclectic group of residents. This is *Dark Shadows* with broader strokes, latching onto the marketable vampires and werewolves, witches and ghosts, and humour and sex.

There is real drama too, but the wit rather dominates. Johnny Depp channels Max Shreck's Nosferatu, gives him some human emotion, but presents him at odds with his new environment. The convoluted love triangle lacks the emotional resonance the television versions gave it, and there's one completely indulgent and over-long sex scene, but otherwise, this works. The audience I saw it with loved it, and I dare say very few had any idea what *Dark Shadows* was originally.

The plot is a variation on the one used in *House of Dark Shadows*. Barnabas is accidentally released from his grave-imprisonment; he returns to Collinwood under the assumed identity of a distant relative from England; he falls for Victoria Winters, who he believes is his former lover reincarnated; meanwhile

his jilted former lover Angelique—a witch, responsible for Barnabas being a vampire—is still carrying out revenge on the Collins family, focussing on the destruction of the family fishing business in Collingsport.

Undoubtedly this is a rather silly film, and very much in the Burton vein. It resurrects the scenarios and heart but not necessarily the letter of the television version, and opens the door unto something new. It's in the final reels that the film falls a little flat—overblown and self-absorbed, throwing spectacle at the screen where emotion would have sufficed in the 1970s. The very act of setting this version of the show in 1972, just after *Night of Dark Shadows*, is a very post-modern, all-too-telling gimmick, which largely works. Stripped of the internet and mobile phones, and with one period imposing itself on another, Barnabas can carry about his atrocities in relative comfort.

If Warner do decide to continue as a series of films, I can't help but wonder if they'll need to turn to a new director and Quentin Collins? Right now, vampires are still hot, and just a glance at the advertising will tell you that WB are firmly behind that. Big Finish offer a more considered, dramatic continuation via their CDs and MP3s, but somewhere down the line, somebody will take another look at the 1991 revival and the 1960s original, and decide that a new television incarnation is the only way forward.

The thing about dark shadows is, there are many of them to get lost in.

by Robert J.E. Simpson





# Fear in the AFTERNOON

**Dark Shadows, Gothic Horror  
and the Soap Opera**



**D**

URING THE  
LATE 1960s, it  
was the day-  
time TV show  
*Dark Shadows*  
(1966-71) that  
first combined

the melodrama of the soap opera with elements of the Gothic horror of folklore, literature and film. Soap opera itself may have its origins in the Gothic, yet it was in the wake of *Dark Shadows* that daytime soap operas in the U.S. began to rely more heavily on Gothic horror, leading to memorable (some would say infamous) storylines on *Days of Our Lives* (1965—) and *Passions* (1999-2008) in the

1990s. *Days* featured the demonic possession of Dr. Marlena Evans, as well as the Kristen/Susan and Hope/Gina lookalike sagas, while *Passions* had a talking doll and a closet leading straight to Hell. This visibility of Gothic horror in U.S. daytime television, made possible by the cult success of *Dark Shadows* thirty years earlier, has likewise led to a proliferation of US prime-time dramas drawing on elements of both soap and horror, including *American Horror Story* (2011—), *Supernatural* (2005—) and *True Blood* (2008—), all of which borrow the Gothic emphasis on the supernatural and the dysfunctional family.

*Dark Shadows* did not directly deal

with the supernatural until its second year, when disappointing ratings led creator Dan Curtis to introduce a character with one problem that daytime soaps had yet to address: he was a vampire.<sup>4</sup> Supposedly a distant cousin of the Collins family, Barnabas Collins, played by Jonathan Frid, was in fact the 200-year old ancestor (also named Barnabas) from whom he claimed to be descended. The storyline proved popular and transformed the meager fortunes of the series.<sup>5</sup> Its storylines drew increasingly on Gothic horror and grew increasingly bizarre and convoluted, involving vampires, ghosts, werewolves and more. Unique among other programs of its kind during the era, *Dark Shadows*





would attract an influence and a loyal following that persisted long after its cancellation by ABC in 1971.

Helen Wheatley, in her work on Gothic television, points out that "the soap opera has always been a space of fantasy and melodrama," yet it was *Dark Shadows* that fortified the relationship between soap operas and Gothic horror. Richard Davenport-Hines suggests the

two genres have "confused paternities, improbable coincidences, melodrama, sudden death, cheap ideas [and] trivially stereotyped characters" in common, and suggests that "television soap opera provides the twentieth century equivalent of Gothic novels." *Dark Shadows* can also be seen as an early example of what Wheatley has described as "the Gothic television narrative" of shows such as *Dallas* and

*Melrose Place*, a narrative characterized by a mood of dread and/or terror inclined to evoke fear or disgust in the viewer; the presence of highly stereotyped characters and plots, often derived from Gothic literary fiction (e.g. the hero or heroine trapped in a menacing domestic situation by an evil villain, or the family attempting to cover up hidden secrets from the past); representations of the supernatural which are either overt (created through the use of special effects) or implied (suggested rather than fully revealed); a proclivity towards the structures and images of the uncanny (repetitions, returns, déjà vu, premonitions, ghosts, doppelgangers, animated inanimate objects and severed body parts, etc.); and perhaps most importantly, homes and families which are haunted, tortured or troubled in some way.<sup>6</sup>

*Dark Shadows* presented uncanny stories based around domestic villainy (in the characters of both Barnabas and, later, Quentin Collins, played by David Selby), the horror of family inheritance, the appearance of numerous lookalikes and reincarnations (particularly through the program's extensive use of storylines involving time travel and parallel uni-



Jonathan Frid (center) and Dan Curtis (far right). From the Ronald V. Borst collection

verses) along with the resurrection of dead characters.

In the 1970s, soaps employed the Gothic primarily through the "menacing domestic situation" created by the villain (usually male), a trope advanced by Wheatley as central to the Gothic television narrative. Soap opera historian Roger Hagedorn has noted shifts in demographics and audience as factors in the inclusion of controversial and previously taboo material throughout the 1970s and '80s; in particular, an increase in the number of women working outside the home and a corresponding decrease in daytime viewership.<sup>7</sup> In order to retain viewers, daytime dramas began to engage with frank depictions of such previously *verboten* issues as domestic violence and sexual abuse, but without the supernatural elements of *Dark Shadows*. Sexual assault became especially visible in daytime television during the late 1970s, advancing rapists as the threatening male figures of the Gothic genre, by turns both sinister and charismatic.<sup>8</sup> Without a doubt, these storylines were horrific in their own respect, such as when *Guiding Light*'s Roger Thorpe, disguised as a clown, pursues a woman—whom he had previously raped—through a carnival funhouse to a disco beat, a sequence adapted from

"Days of Our Lives initially based its Gothic horror in the subgenre of the 'slasher' film"



Deidre Hall in *Days of Our Lives*

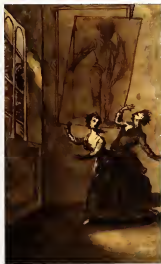


Illustration from *The Castle of Otranto* by Susanna Duncum, c. 1725–1822

Horace Walpole's 1764 Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto*. Gothic horror, however, seemingly dormant since the cancellation of *Dark Shadows* in 1971, would resume prominence in daytime television during the early 1980s, particularly in NBC's *Days of Our Lives*, which had until that time been a relatively traditional family melodrama set in the Midwestern city of Salem.

Premiering in the November of 1965, *Days of Our Lives* was the story of the upper-class Horton family, headed by Dr. Tom Horton (Macdonald Carey) and his wife, Alice (Frances Reid). In many ways, from its beginning *Days* suggested a Gothic influence through its ongoing concern with home and family dysfunction, with storylines revolving around love triangles, medical problems, issues

of paternity, generational conflicts and other sources of trauma. However, in the early 1980s, following the ratings success of ABC's more youth-oriented daytime drama line-up,<sup>9</sup> the series made significant changes in its stories, veering from straightforward family melodrama dealing with contemporary social issues to Gothic sensationalism, with head writer Pat Falken-Smith and her successor, Margaret DePriest,<sup>10</sup> transforming *Days of Our Lives* into a "romantic suspense story."<sup>11</sup> The transition began in early 1982 with the "Salem Strangler" storyline, in which a serial killer terrorized Salem and targeted psychiatrist Dr. Marlena Evans (Deidre Hall, who had joined the cast in 1976), necessitating her protection by police officer Roman Brady (Wayne Northrop), with the two falling in love as the storyline



progressed. Unlike *Dark Shadows*, which relied heavily on the "classical" monsters of literature, *Days of Our Lives* initially based its Gothic horror in the subgenre of the "slasher" film in fashion in the early 1980s, in such down-market fare as *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* (dir. Sean S. Cunningham, 1980) and more upscale "thrillers" such as *The Eyes of Laura Mars* (Irving Kershner, 1978). Salem was shocked when Marlena's strangled body was found, and similarly overjoyed when Marlena turned up alive, her twin sister Samantha (played by Hall's real-life twin) having been killed instead by accident, one of many instances in which the program made use of *doppelgangers* and uncanny resurrections. In the years and decades to come, *Days of Our Lives* serial killers the Salem Slasher (1983-4) and the Salem Stalker (2003-4) would also claim countless characters as victims.

Marlena would emerge as the show's primary Gothic heroine, surviv-

ing a number of ordeals and losses. After marrying Roman and giving birth to his twins, she was widowed when Roman was presumed dead; two years later, he turned up alive, with amnesia and plastic surgery altering his appearance (and now played by Drake Hogestyn). They reunited, only for Marlena herself to be presumed dead in a plane crash; of course, just as Roman fell in love with another woman, Marlena returned, having spent four years in an induced coma on a tropical island, awaking and escaping in the midst of a raging storm. Before any re-

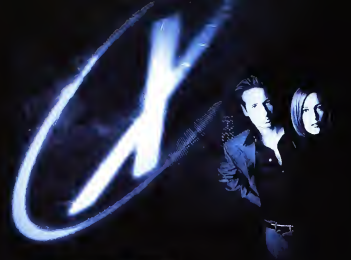
union of consequence could take place, the real Roman Brady (again played by Northrop) turned up, having been held captive on an island, and Hogestyn's Roman was revealed to be an imposter, John Black, brainwashed into thinking he was Marlena's husband. This seemingly ridiculous storyline nevertheless demonstrates how *Days of Our Lives* shared with the earlier *Dark Shadows* a Gothic emphasis on identity confusion and mysterious returns.

Much of the Gothic-tinged intrigue that has taken place in Salem since the 1980s was the work of Stefano DiMera (played on and off since 1982 by Joseph Mascolo). A powerful, mysterious man of vaguely European origin, he arrived in Salem and began manipulating the lives of its residents (shades of Barnabas Collins arriving at the family estate of Collinwood). Associated with high culture (opera, chess, etc.), Stefano's character was clearly influenced by the despotic aristocratic villains of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Gothic novel tradition. Initially presented as a figure of the criminal underworld and organized crime, he later became



more enigmatic and omniscient, verging on possessing supernatural powers. Certainly, he seemed nearly immortal; nicknamed the "Phoenix" for his ability to triumph over certain death, Stefano has returned from the dead several times (he has survived a stroke, his car crashing into a river, falling off a catwalk into a fire after being shot by Marlena,

a brain tumor, a car explosion, drowning, being thrown off a penthouse balcony, and a gas explosion in the catacombs below Paris). He has also been linked with the Gothic notion of intergenerational evil, with the "DiMera curse" corrupting



Joseph Mascolo as Stefano DiMera

his offspring, of which there are many. He has engineered multiple kidnappings (usually involving Marlena, the object of his unending obsession), resulting in too many captivity storylines to count. However, like Barnabas Collins, Stefano has also been shown, from time to time, in a sympathetic light as protective and loving towards members of his family, although that love often has destructive consequences.

*Days of Our Lives* continued its trend towards Gothic horror in the 1990s, presenting the kind of fantastic storylines that *Dark Shadows* had thirty years before. 1993 saw the villainous Vivian Alamain (Louise Sorel) burying rival Dr Carly Manning (Crystal Chappell)

alive, keeping her in such a state by way of a ventilation system and taunting her from above ground. Stefano would also return from the dead that fall, following a long absence, and within a year would be holding Marlena and John Black captive in a dungeon beneath Maison Blanche, his rather creepy southern plantation, as the rest of the cast took part in a charity cotillion in full antebellum splendor, while a lookalike for another dead character, Hope Williams Brady (Kristian Alfonso), roamed the corridors during the obligatory storm. However, while these storylines, under the regime of head writer James E Reilly, moved the series in a more Gothic direction than ever before, it wouldn't be until the end of 1994 that *Days of Our Lives* engaged explicitly with the supernatural in the same manner as had *Dark Shadows*, in a storyline that would involve raising the Devil himself.

The mid-1990s saw a resurgence of Gothic television,<sup>12</sup> including *Twin Peaks* (1990-1) and *The X-Files* (1993-2002), seeking the niche audience<sup>13</sup> that became so crucial in that period, with the threat from the recently formed FOX, the fourth broadcast network, as well as cable channels.<sup>14</sup> During this period, *Days of Our Lives* summoned Gothic horror as never had before: on Christmas Eve 1994, Marlena Evans was revealed to be possessed by Satan, and seen levitating above her bed in the same manner as

Regan McNeil (Linda Blair) in *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973). She was also found to be the "Desecrator," the nefarious individual who had set the town Christmas tree afire and vandalized the Catholic church. During this period, Marlena's eyes began to glow green and she spoke in a deep and menacing voice. Her condition was attributed to Stefano, who had gained entrance to her bedroom via a secret passage located behind an armoire. As a masked mystery man, he placed her in a trance-like state (using mind-altering drugs) and took her on nightly journeys (reminiscent of *The Phantom of the Opera*) to exotic locales, seeking to win her love while also leaving her susceptible to demonic possession.

While possessed, Marlena engaged in all kinds of behavior uncharacteristic of a soap heroine: she attempted to smother a priest with a pillow, set a church on fire, chloroformed romantic rival Kristen DiMera (Eileen Davidson) and painted pentagrams all over her body, and morphed into Kristen in an attempt to seduce John (who turned out to have been a priest before Stefano brainwashed him years before) before turning into a panther to attack a group of religious scholars, among other things. As the months proceeded, Salem became filled with an encroaching sense of evil, among fateful prophecies and omens. Besides the possessed Marlena, there was also on hand an intervening angel, Gabriel, and assorted demons and demonic apparitions of deceased



Trini Parks, pilot episode



characters. After more than six months in this condition, Marlena was successfully exorcised by Father John Black, the Devil driven out a ceremony in which a good portion of the cast took part.

Marlena's possession storyline marked the first time since *Dark Shadows* that the US daytime soap opera had directly engaged with the supernatural, inspired this time not by classical monster movies or slasher films, but the horror of the occult featured in films such as *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968) and *The Omen* (Richard Donner, US, 1976) while still informed by the horror of Gothic literature. This was particularly true of the character of Stefano, whose villainy was motivated by his love/obsession with Marlena and echoed Barnabas Collins' similar sentiments toward waitress Maggie Evans on *Dark Shadows*. This particularly overt digression proved successful; in the week following the storyline's launch, *Days of Our Lives* witnessed a ratings surge, gaining one million households.<sup>23</sup>

NBC's successful experiment led to imitations: ABC's *General Hospital* premiered a spin-off, *Port Charles* (1997-2003), which, despite starting as a straight-up soap opera, eventually transformed into Gothic horror. Unlike *Days of Our Lives* or *Port Charles*, both of which started as traditional soap operas,

NBC's *Passions* (1999-2008) (created by James E Reilly, the former *Days of Our Lives* head writer behind Marlena's possession) was conceived from the beginning as Gothic horror, drawing direct comparisons to *Dark Shadows*. Cultivating a self-aware and consciously campy tone, *Passions* featured among its characters Tabitha Lennox (Juliet Mills), an eccentric neighbor who was in fact an ancient and powerful witch; along with her sidekick, Timmy (Josh Ryan Evans), a doll she had brought to life with one of her spells. In addition to witchcraft manipulating the lives of community members, demons were frequently on hand, especially when Tabitha's teenage neighbor, Charity Standish (Molly Stanton), was pulled into her bedroom closet, which proved to be a portal to hell. Other Gothic-infused storylines appearing on *Passions* included the repeated marauding of ax-wielding serial killer "Norma" Bates, a disturbing number of rapes, the appearance of "Zombie Charity," and Julian Crane's return from the (presumed) dead after journeying to the merry old land of Oz.

Despite this kind of experimentation, the genre has taken some significant hits in recent years, with many quarters declaring the "death of the soap opera."<sup>24</sup> Since 2009, four long-running daytime soap operas have been cancelled: *Guiding Light*, *As the World Turns* (1956-2010), *All My Children* (1970-2011), and *One Life to Live* (1968-2012). All that now remains are *Days of Our Lives*, *General Hospital*, *The Young and the Restless* (1973—), and *The Bold and the Beautiful* (1987—), none of which in their contemporary incarnations show the same investment in Gothic horror as did *Days of Our Lives* and *Passions* in the 1990s.

Serial melodrama has become particularly visible in prime time, however, distinct from '80s soaps oriented towards the Gothic, if not horror (*Dallas* being one example, through its notorious "dream season," ending with Bobby Ewing being resurrected in a shower after having been killed off a year before, his death revealed and the entire

season having been his ex-wife Pam's dream.) Programs such as *Supernatural*, *True Blood*, *American Horror Story*, *Desperate Housewives* (2004-12), *Dexter* (2006—) and even such procedurals as the *CSI* and *Law and Order* franchises rely upon the Gothic television narrative as described by Helen Wheatley, through their shared atmosphere of dread, plots and characters evoking Gothic literature, and the presence of the supernatural or other uncanny elements. These programs also evince a preoccupation with dysfunctional or claustrophobic representations of home and family, linking them to the vanishing form of the daytime soap opera and, in turn, to the Gothic horror of *Dark Shadows*.

Finding literary inspiration in the Gothic world of Bram Stoker, Mary Shelley and Henry James, *Dark Shadows* pioneered the use of overt horror and the supernatural in the soap opera; it introduced Barnabas Collins as a vampire antagonist and eventually transformed him into a beloved antihero; and its influence lived on after its cancellation, leading other dramas to adopt increasingly outlandish storylines. As soaps declined, TV drama nevertheless continued to engage with Gothic horror in serialized formats across genres. And to think—it all started with a vampire.

by Drew Beard

## Endnotes

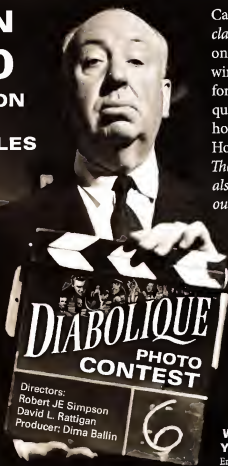
- <sup>1</sup> This article focuses on U.S. daytime soap operas, although daytime soaps in the U.K. have demonstrated their own investment in Gothic horror.
- <sup>2</sup> Helen Wheatley, *Gothic Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 147.
- <sup>3</sup> Wheatley, 146.
- <sup>4</sup> Wheatley, 152.
- <sup>5</sup> Wheatley, 148-149.
- <sup>6</sup> Wheatley, 3.
- <sup>7</sup> Roger Moggford, "Decisions to be Customed: A Brief History of Serial Nostalgia," in *So Be It Customed: Soap Operas Around the World*, ed. Robert C. Allen (New York: Routledge, 1992), 38.
- <sup>8</sup> Lizan Levens deals with this at length in *Watching in Sex: The New Sexual Culture* (Queens: Duke University Press, 2007).
- <sup>9</sup> Christopher Schearing, *The Soap Opera Encyclopedia* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 67.
- <sup>10</sup> Schearing, 68.
- <sup>11</sup> Schearing, 69.
- <sup>12</sup> Wheatley, 162.
- <sup>13</sup> Wheatley, 167.
- <sup>14</sup> Wheatley, 173.
- <sup>15</sup> Roberts Caplan, "Devilish Dealings," *Soap Opera Digest*, February 28, 1995, 22-25.
- <sup>16</sup> "The Death of Soap Operas: What Does It Say About Television?" *The Week*, April 14, 2011, <http://www.theweek.com/article/index/214320/the-death-of-soap-operas-what-does-it-say-about-television> (accessed January 25, 2012).

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# BORN WEIRD



Don Coscarelli directs Paul Giamatti. John Dies at the End (2008)

**D**ON COSCARELLI, BORN in Tripoli to best-selling novelist Kate Coscarelli, isn't your typical filmmaker. He didn't go to CalArts or NYU or any film school. In fact, UCLA rejected him. He persisted, and at age 19, he became the youngest director ever to have a feature film distributed by a major studio. Universal released *Jim, the World's Greatest*, his portrayal of a teen dealing with alcohol abuse, in 1976.

As connoisseurs of the wonderfully weird, we widened our collective eyes at the macabre *Phantasm*, in 1979. Fueled by Coscarelli's own nightmare of a flying chrome sphere with needle chasing him down endless marble halls, *Phantasm* displayed just the type of nonsensical horror that we all experience in nightmares.

If you don't know the *Phantasm* series (which spawned three sequels filled with re-animated corpses shrunk down into evil dwarves in another dimension and sent back to our world to do the Tall Man's bidding), get onto Netflix, turn off the lights, and experience the oddities that Coscarelli is known for. You haven't lived until you've seen a quad-barrel shotgun blow away a nasty dwarf, or a lascivious lady in lavender turn into an old funeral director in the middle of a lusty cemetery romp.

The funeral director—the Tall Man—has joined the ranks of iconic villains in the world of horror cinema. Played by character actor Angus Scrimm, the Tall Man is fond of growling out his lines, whenever he chooses to speak. Phrases like “Booooyyy!” and “Ice cream man!” are among his favorites, but some are more philosophically menacing, such as “You think that when you die, you go to heaven? You come to us!”

*Phantasm* had that grimy, leftover veneer of the grindhouse era, or the later forbidden horror section of the '80s and '90s video store. Before zombies were cool, visiting this section of the now nearly extinguished video store was just a step above sliding into the back room. “For many folks, horror is considered one step above porn,” Don told me. “And I don't have much to say to them.”





He does more than send malicious dwarves and bloodthirsty, skull-drilling steel balls after his protagonists. He wrote and directed *The Beastmaster*, a sword-and-sandals epic that pitted his leading man and lady (and some helpful ferrets) against evil sorcerers. He was reportedly banned from the editing room after creative disputes with his producers.

In 2002, Coscarelli unleashed *Bubba Ho-Tep*, a feature adaptation of Joe R. Lansdale's short story pitting a geriatric Elvis and a black JFK against a dastardly mummy with a penchant for cowboy boots and bathroom slurs against Cleopatra. It takes place almost exclusively in a forgotten Texas nursing home, where our beleaguered American heroes, black JFK (Ossie Davis playing a victim of a CIA-sanctioned skin-coloring scheme gone awry) and Elvis (played by Bruce Campbell, who traded places with an Elvis impersonator and got screwed when his double kicked the bucket), battle the ancient evil mummy (who feasts on old people's souls), whom Elvis dubs "Bubba Ho-Tep."

Confused? Intrigued? Probably both. *Bubba Ho-Tep* is a madcap cult comedy that simultaneously reveals a story of courage, humanity, and friendship. While some critics found it too silly, even Roger Ebert had words of praise for it:

It has the damndest ingratulating way of making us sit there and grin at its harebrained audacity, laugh at its outhouse humor, and be somewhat moved (not deeply, but somewhat) at the poignancy of these two old men and their situation.

At the end of the film, the audience is teased with a promo for an equally outrageous sequel with the future adventures of Elvis kung-fu-fighting against female vampires. *Bubba Nosferatu*, originally intended as a joke, will only be made if Don writes the story, finds the funding, and manages to put aside his creative differences with Campbell. "There's a huge fan demand for it," he said, but bringing it to the screen "is a multidimensional puzzle."

The *Masters of Horror* TV series

was at least innovative in that it gathered (mostly) beloved horror directors and gave them the funding to (sometimes) terrorize cable subscribers for an hour. In this instance, the director was in the company of horror giants like Stuart Gordon, John Carpenter, and Dario Argento. As part of its first season, he wrote and directed *Incident on and off a Mountain Road*, a bloody tale of survival that isn't quite what it seems. A visceral mix of survivalism, psychological horror, and torture porn, the story rendered the tale of Ellen, a seemingly hapless victim whose car collides with an abandoned vehicle on a desolate mountain road. She's then kid-



napped by a disfigured serial killer known as Moonface and imprisoned in the basement with Angus Scrimm. Without giving too much away, eyeballs are gouged, windows are broken, truths are twisted, and delusions abound.

Coscarelli has been touring film festivals with his newest concoction of the incredibly surreal, *John Dies at the End*, which premiered at Sundance in January. Its modest budget made it "an extremely ambitious movie," Don revealed, "and to pull it off was like going to war." He described the film's origins in typically surreal fashion:

*John Dies at the End* may be the first motion picture project selected by a robot. I had been reading some transgressive fiction from an imprint called Permuted Press. One day in my email box I found an



email from an amazon.com robot telling me that if I liked the last Permuted Press book I read, that I would love *John Dies at the End*. The robot was right! Phillip K. Dick could write a great short story about this subject, if he were still around.

The film adapts just one third of David Wong's novel, leaving an opportunity for a sequel. "There is a lot of material left over, and John and Dave are great characters who could continue to battle the forces of darkness for years to come," Don tells me. But ultimately, it depends on *John Dies at*



the *End*'s financial fortunes when it gains a theatrical release, hopefully this fall. "It's all in the audience's hands," he says.

He neither confirms nor denies the latest rumors of a *Phantasm V*. "I am great friends with all the actors from *Phantasm*. There's nothing I would like more than to see the saga continue," Don says. "The fans can take heart in that I think about how to get that done every day."

by Michele "Izzy" Galgana

## The Children of the Night - What Music They Make!

# Aspects of Gothic Opera



Christopher Lee has always regretted that he never became an opera singer, but in a way the Dracula films he starred in for Hammer required an operatic performance style, even though he spoke rather than sang what few lines he was given. Given his operatic ambitions, it's ironic that Lee so resented Hammer's increasingly operatic presentation of the character, what with scarlet linings for his cape and ever redder contact lenses; but James Bernard's music had always been operatic in its general approach.

**I**N TASTE THE BLOOD of Dracula (dir. Peter Sasdy, 1970), for example, Dracula says, "He has destroyed my servant... He will be destroyed," and Bernard's music punctuates the phrases in a way that isn't so far removed from the approach of Verdi, whose music Bernard so loved. The ride to the ruined church in that film is also comparable to the moment at the end of Act I of Verdi's *Rigoletto*, when the hunchbacked jester, Rigoletto, realises with utter panic that his beloved daughter has been abducted right before his admittedly blindfolded eyes. Like Verdi, Bernard raises the



Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1836)

tension of the scene by sequencing his little motif through successively higher pitches to create a very operatic sense of dramatic tension. A ghastly gong then resonantly shudders as we cut to the interior of the church, lit by flaming torches, and the succeeding silence provides a stark contrast with the melodrama of howling owls and squeaking cemetery gates that preceded it.

Looking back at the history of opera in general, there is much to suggest the operatic origins of Hammer's Gothic horrors. This trend might be said to have started in 1821, when Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1836) unleashed the Gothic sensationalism of the Wolf's Glen scene in his opera *Der Freischütz*. This is a rather difficult title to translate, literally meaning



Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

"the free shot", which is why it's usually left in the original German, but *The Magic Buller* is a fairly close approximation.

When the opera was put on in Paris after its Berlin premiere, it suffered the indignity of being called *Robin des Bois*, which is the French name for Robin Hood. This and the appalling production it was given so outraged Hector Berlioz (1803-1869), himself the composer of one of the world's most Gothic symphonies (*Symphonie fantastique*), that he never forgot it. In his *Memoirs*, he referred to the production as "a gross travesty, hacked and mutilated in the most wanton fashion" (1) - words that call to mind Peter



James Bernard (1925-2001)



THEATRE LYRIQUE IMPERIAL. LE FREISCHÜTZ. (scène 3) Acte II. — Dessiné de M. Hamel. — Voir l'illustration

Cushing's lines as Professor Van Helsing in the tie-in LP of *The Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires*, which Hammer issued back in the 1970s, wherein he speaks of victims who have been "hack'd and slashed and left to die in pools of their own blood" The imagery is definitely the same. Recalling with some relish his days as a medical student, Berlioz wrote of "the fragments of limbs, the grinning faces and gaping skulls, the bloody quagmire underfoot and the atrocious smell it gave off." (2)

So, it is not surprising that Berlioz should eventually have composed music for an operatic adaptation of Matthew Lewis's once-shocking Gothic novel *The Monk*. It was called *La nonne sanglante* (*The Bloody Nun*), but sadly Berlioz never completed it. The libretto was sub-

sequently passed on to Charles Gounod (1818-1893), of *Faust* fame, but it failed to attract the crowds and was eventually removed by a new director of the opera house after only eleven performances. The new director called it "filth," but fortunately we don't have to agree with him.

Berlioz was so enthusiastic about Weber's *Der Freischütz* that he composed music for all the dialogue, which in Germany was merely spoken; hence the genre designation of this kind of entertainment, which is not strictly an opera, but rather what is known in as a *Singspiel*, or "singing play." But if a work was to be produced at the Paris Opéra at that time, it was necessary that every word be sung rather than spoken, so Berlioz duly obliged. He also orchestrated Weber's concert waltz *Invitation to the Dance* to supply the equally

required ballet scene.

In his amusing collection of stories about music, assembled together under the title *Evenings in the Orchestra*, Berlioz tells a macabre tale about how a real skeleton found its way on stage as one of the ghoulish props. It so happened that a grocer's assistant—"a big red-headed lout"—had hissed Weber's music and been thrown out of the theatre by Weber's enthusiastic champions. Six months later, the grocer's assistant dies from overeating, and when the prop master in charge of the current production of *Der Freischütz* pays a visit to his doctor friend in search of gruesome props, the doctor presents him with the prepared skeleton of the offending red-headed philistine.

"You see that, young man?" the prop master explains when he returns to

# Fragments of limbs, grinning faces and gaping skulls!



the theatre with his prize.

"Yes, sir."

"He is making his debut at the Opéra tomorrow. Make him a nice little box where he can stretch his legs in comfort."

"Yes, sir."

"As for his costume, take an iron rod and stick it in his backbone, so that he stands as straight as M. Petitpa when he is about to do a pirouette."

"Yes, sir."

"Then you must fasten four candles together and place them in his right hand; he's a grocer, he'll feel quite at home with them."

All this was done, and from then on, at each performance of *Freischütz*, just as Zamiel cries out, "I am here!" there is a flash of lightning, a tree comes crashing

down, and our grocer, who was once so hostile to Weber's music, appears in the red glow of the Bengal lights, enthusiastically brandishing his lighted torch. (3)

But those unfamiliar with the story of *Freischütz* will not know who Zamiel is, so before any further ado, a word about the plot. The hero, Max, is a lousy shot, which is very unfortunate for him, because hitting a bullseye is the only way he can ever hope to win the hand of the beautiful Agathe, who is the prized trophy of a shooting competition organised in her honour. Realising he'll never be able to win Agathe without supernatural intervention, Max enlists the help of Kaspar, who is in league with Zamiel, the devil. At dead of night Max and Kaspar make their way to the Wolf's Glen to forge seven magic bullets that will not fail to find their mark. (In German, the Wolf's Glen is "Der Schreckensschlucht," which sounds even creepier. The English translation of "the terrible glen" doesn't quite match it.)

Kaspar duly invokes the devil and holds the magic bullets up to the light of the moon, and with each ballistic blessing increasingly supernatural events occur. Everything starts quietly, however, with owls hooting, an effect Weber

created with flutes that intone a particular relationship between two notes known, appropriately enough, as "the devil in music"—or *diabolus in musica*, to give it its more impressive Latin title. It's quite simple, however. If you start on middle C on a piano keyboard and count up four white notes, you arrive at F. If you then raise the F by a semitone, by playing the adjacent black key, to make F-sharp, and play it at the same time as middle C, hey presto, you have the *diabolus in musica*, the ultimate musical short hand for horror. James Bernard uses it all the time, and as soon as we hear it we know that something unpleasant or frightening is going to happen.

Back to the story: A storm wind gathers, black boars run across the scene, followed by four fiery wheels, a procession of ghostly huntsman across the sky and finally a terrific storm. The music Weber provides for these episodes is so graphic and overwhelming that it caused a positive sensation at its premiere, fully the nineteenth-century equivalent of Hammer's original impact in the late 1950s; and just as was the case with Hammer's competitors, opera composers wanted to jump on the bandwagon of Weber's success.

Hot on the heels of *Der Freis-*



Design for Act 2 (Wolf's Glen) of *Der Freischütz*, 1822 Weimar



chütz came an opera based the story written by Lord Byron's private physician, Dr John Polidori, during the haunted Swiss house party of 1816 that also gave birth to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Polidori's story, economically entitled *The Vampyre*, is the first modern vampire tale, and was largely based on the despotic personality of the author's poetical employer. In the opera, the action takes place in Scotland, thanks to the popularity at the time of Sir Walter Scott's novels, which did for the Highlands what Bram Stoker later did for Transylvania. Consequently, it's perhaps rather amusing to contemporary eyes to see etchings of the production which show Lord Ruthven, as the vampire is known, dressed not in a cloak but a kilt. Ruthven must drink the blood of three virgins by midnight to



avoid being dragged down to hell. But if he succeeds, he will be granted another year of undead existence.

As one might expect, everything ends in a terrific thunderstorm and Ruthven, who fails to do what the Vampire Master commanded at the beginning, is dragged down to hell, rather as Don Giovanni, in Mozart's opera of that name, meets his doom. The music, however, is much more demonic than that of Mozart's admittedly frightening finale. It was composed by Heinrich Marschner (1795-1861) and in many ways sounds like the music of one of his greatest admirers, Richard Wagner (1813-1883). Wagner so admired *Der Vampyre*, as Marschner's version was called, that he even wrote extra words and music for it, which were first performed by Wagner's brother, Albert, when Wagner was conducting the opera in Würzburg in 1833, only five years after the work's premiere in Leipzig. In 1992 *Der Vampyre* was dusted off by the BBC and turned into a soap opera, updating the action to the present day and making an effectively campy satire on what we then used to call yuppie corporate greed. Vampires are, after all, a very good symbol of capitalism, as Karl Marx knew very well.

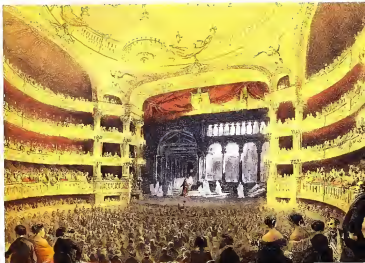
Wagner ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> a huge admirer of ~~Wagner~~ <sup>Wagner</sup> admitting in his memoirs that *Freischütz*, though mainly because of its spooky plot, affected my imagination with characteristic intensity. The excitement of horror and fear of ghosts constitute a singular factor in the development of my emotional life. (4)

Indeed, a strain of Gothic horror runs throughout Wagner's output, but before we look into that, we



*Der Vampyre*  
Lord Ruthven

A drinking-song followed by a prayer, an orgy followed by a church scene.



Giacchino Meyerbeer (1791–1864)



mustn't forget another composer who equally inspired him. This was Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864), who was actually, despite his Italian-sounding name, a German composer originally called Jakob Liebmann Beer. As the name might suggest, Meyerbeer was Jewish, and before we go any further we unfortunately need to remember that Wagner had a catastrophic blind-spot when it came to Jews. So virulent was Wagner's antisemitism that he dreamt of filling a theatre with Jews and setting fire to it, and he was forever pestering his Jewish friends (amazingly he had quite a few) to get baptised. Wagner

was indeed the ultimate Phantom of the Opera, and it is easy to see why this aspect of Wagner's work inspired Adolf Hitler.

Speaking of *The Phantom of the Opera* inevitably reminds one of Andrew Lloyd Webber, and in many ways Meyerbeer was the nineteenth-century equivalent of Lord Lloyd Webber. He was never ennobled, but he certainly made an equally mind-blowing amount of money from his music, and some of the spin-off similarities between the two are intriguing. The gimmick of Meyerbeer's 1849 opera *Le Prophète*, for example, is a roller-skating ballet, which caused a rush on that product in the shops of Paris that year. Lloyd Webber's *Starlight Express* might well trace its ancestry to that. Also like Lloyd Webber, Meyerbeer knew exactly what his public wanted, and as a consequence, the public were routinely slain by what he gave them. Mendelssohn once said that there was "etwas für Jeden" in a Meyerbeer opera—something for everyone—and he wasn't far wrong. The twentieth-century critic Martin Cooper nicely summed up the effect of a Meyerbeer night out as consisting of "a drinking-song followed by a prayer, an orgy followed by a church scene ... conspirators making way for lovers, a skating ballet ... a mad woman with a pet goat, a hero-

ine dressed as a soldier. Never a dull moment." Cooper seems a little snuffy about all that, but surely this is what Gothic opera is all about?

Meyerbeer's actual music is in a rather different league to that of Lord Lloyd Webber, but to be fair, it was the prolific librettist Eugène Scribe (1791–1861), Meyerbeer's version of Tim Rice, who came up with all the dramatic effects on which so much of Meyerbeer's success depended. Scribe's non-operatic projects were decidedly un-Gothic (of his 374 plays, nearly all are comedies or satires on bourgeois foibles), but he made up for that lack in the truly sensational Gothic Grand Opera *Robert le diable* in 1831. (It was also Scribe, incidentally, who wrote the text for *La nonne sanglante*.) So ubiquitous did *Robert le diable* become that it was even mentioned in Dumas' novel, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, where chapter 52 is subtitled "Robert le diable" because it takes place during a performance of the work at the Paris Opéra, for which it had originally been composed. Dumas doesn't say much about the opera itself, but the mere title of the piece is enough to add a certain glamour and mystery to the persona of the mysterious Count:

"Do you observe," said the Countess





## They take on alluring forms, and we see the ghostly waftings of their funeral shrouds.

G— to Albert, who had returned to her side, 'that man does nothing like other people; he listens most devoutly to the third act of *Robert le diable*, and when the fourth begins makes a precipitate retreat.' (5)

For good measure, Dumas also refers to *Der Vampyr* in this chapter—or, at least, the character of Lord Ruthven, "the

Vampire of the Salle Argentino."

Anyway, the most Gothic (and once very famous) scene of *Robert* occurs in the finale to Act III, which is set in the ruins of the Convent of Saint Rosalie. As the curtain rises, we dimly perceive the dark and shadowy cloisters of the place. To the left stand the mouldering tombstones of long-dead nuns, and in the centre, the marble statue of the abbey's patron saint surveys the scene, holding a magic cypress branch in its hands. It is this branch that Robert seeks, for it will give him resistless power. At the diabolical suggestion of Bertram, a fiend disguised as a human being (who also happens to be Robert's father—confused?), Robert has been persuaded to enter the convent at midnight, secure the branch and use it to win the fair Isabella, Queen of Sicily. It should not be too much of a surprise to learn that Bertram wants the cypress branch for himself and is merely using Robert to achieve his own diabolical ends. Bertram conjures the spectres of dead nuns whose sins, during life, deprived the convent of its sanctity. They take on alluring forms of beautiful maidens, and by the light of the full moon, we see the ghostly waftings of their funeral shrouds.

Film director Roy Ward Baker captured this general mood perfectly in the exquisitely shot prologue to Hammer's *The Vampire Lovers* (1970), in which a similarly enshrouded spectre wafts through a misty graveyard. Strangely, the original set for Meyerbeer's convent, by Pierre-Luc-Charles Cicéri, is Romanesque rather than Gothic in style, which is perhaps a little disappointing, highly effective though it is; but just like the shrouded vampire in *The Vampire Lovers*, Meyerbeer's shrouded spectres are revealed to be actually rather sexy. Edgar Degas evocatively captured this compelling scene in a painting that now belongs to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Robert enters, and the nuns set about seducing him with three dances. The first one attempts to get him drunk, the second tempts him to gamble and the final one is frankly erotic. The abbess manages to extract a kiss from Robert but this sends a shiver down his spine. He swiftly snatches the branch and runs off. Bertram, meanwhile, is very pleased with how things have turned out and watches as demons emerge from hell to drag the unfortunate nuns back to their rightful place, their shrouds lying motionless on the moonlit flagstones of the convent. Meyerbeer originally conceived much of the music for an adaptation of Goethe's *Faust*, but Louis Spohr (1784–1859) beat him to it, so the demonic qualities he had already composed came in very handy for the new subject. Meyerbeer, who was an astute business man, realised that Gothic was high fashion and, like Hammer MD Sir James Carreras, gave the public what they wanted. "If you want Strauss waltzes," said Sir James, "I'll make them." (6) But his public preferred dancing with death, and so did Meyerbeer's audience. Meyerbeer didn't just trust good judgement, however. Every day he asked for God's assistance, as this extract from his immensely long divine shopping list demonstrates:

Almighty God! ... Preserve my artistic creativity and effectiveness ... Let my fame spread throughout the world and transform my enemies into sup-



porters and admirers. Preserve the five French operas I have composed and let them be part of the repertoire of all theatres throughout my lifetime and 50 years beyond my death. (7)

Sadly, even Meyerbeer's modest request of fifty years wasn't heeded by the Almighty, and unlike Hammer's, Meyerbeer's reputation plummeted soon after his death. His operas are no longer in the repertoire, due in part to their expense, requiring, as they do, not just costly sets but a cast of top-flight singers. If revived more often, however, they would certainly complement our own blockbuster culture, and some have some social relevance. On the heels of *Robert*, for example, came *Les Huguenots*, in which, as William IV of Prussia described the proceedings, "Catholics and Protestants cut each other's throats and a Jew sets the proceedings to music." (8)

The first performance of *Robert* was not without its unintentional sensations. At the beginning of the famous third act a dozen lightened lamps fell on the stage in front of Mlle Dorus, the soprano; the singer who created the role of Robert, Adolphe Nouritt, became so excited in the last act that he fell into a trapdoor and nearly killed himself; and during the resurrection of the nuns a curtain of clouds almost fell on Mlle Taglioni who, as the abbess, was about to rise from her tomb.

No one could ignore Meyerbeer, who was, while he lived, the God of the Paris Opéra. He was immensely influential but equally kind and generous. When the young Wagner came to Paris to seek his fortune, Meyerbeer recognised his talent and graciously extended the hand of friendship. Characteristically, Wagner bit that hand clean off as soon as Meyerbeer had served his purpose. "It is not that I hate him," Wagner wrote in a letter to Liszt in 1851, "but that I find him infinitely repugnant." (9) Being Jewish, rich, successful and talented was too much of a celebrity constellation for Wagner to handle, and it is largely due to Wagner's subsequent smear campaign that Meyerbeer's posthumous reputation has suffered so much; but this didn't stop Wag-



ner imitating the man whose music he so trashed. Indeed, his first major success, *Rienzi*, was a deliberate attempt to imitate Meyerbeer's style.

Meyerbeer no doubt fully realised that Wagner, whatever else he was, was a musical genius, and he encouraged Wagner with the composition and promotion of his second great success, *Der fliegende Holländer* (*The Flying Dutchman*), though in the event Paris did not see the premiere of that work. The Flying Dutchman himself is also a distinctly Gothic figure: a cursed immortal, who seeks redemption through the love of a good woman. The opera follows a similar kind of plot to that of the 1979 Werner Herzog remake of FW Murnau's *Nosferatu*, which is why Herzog chose to accompany that film with Wagnerian music. (In fact, he uses the Prelude to *Das Rheingold* rather than *Der fliegende Holländer*, but the inference is clear: Herzog wanted to place his film within the context of a specifically Wagnerian

Romantic tradition, with its shared theme of redemption through love.) Klaus Kinski's lonely Count Dracula is redeemed by Isabelle Adjani's Lucy, who sacrifices herself to the vampire who in turn is overcome by the sunlight of dawn. A similar thing happens at the end of *The Flying Dutchman*, when Senta hurls herself into the waves of the ocean and we see her spirit rising to heaven with that of her lover as the curtain falls. The music for the Dutchman himself contains some of the darkest and most brooding passages Wagner ever wrote and would have ideally suited Christopher Lee had he been able to follow the operatic career he so desperately desired. As Lee said of his own portrayal of Dracula, he wanted to convey the loneliness of being undead: "his extraordinary stillness, punctuated by bouts of manic energy with feats of strength belying his appearance; his power complex; the qual-



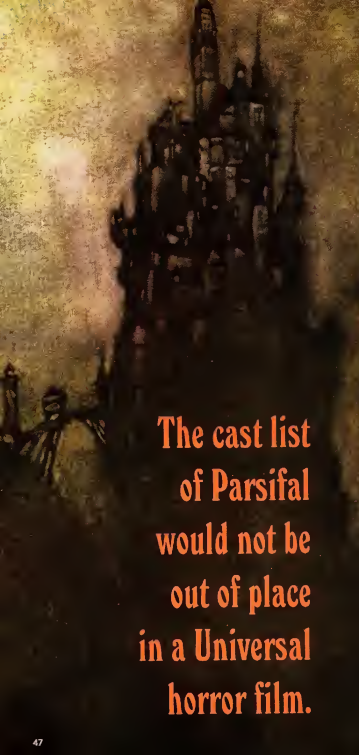
The Flying Dutchman, illustration

ity of being done for but undead" (10). Most if not all of these characteristics apply to the Dutchman, who is basically a vampire without teeth.

Even at the other end of his career,



Klaus Kinski and Isabelle Adjani in *Nosferatu the Vampire* (1979)



# The cast list of Parsifal would not be out of place in a Universal horror film.

the second act of Wagner's *Parsifal*, his final music drama, owes much to the structure of *Robert le diable*'s third act. (For Bertram's seductive nuns, simply substitute the evil magician, Klingsor, and his seductive flower maidens). *Parsifal* also has vampire imagery in common with the opera that Wagner so admired as a young man. We've seen how vampires can be used as a metaphor for capitalism. In *Parsifal*, Wagner used blood imagery



*Parsifal* illustrations by Willy Pogany

for unsavoury racial theories, though it's important to stress that this is only one layer of meaning, and by no means the overriding one, in this endlessly fascinating and astonishingly beautiful creation. The fact remains, however, that *Parsifal* is drenched in even more blood than a Hammer horror film. "Much too much blood," was how Friedrich Nietzsche described it. (11) There are, in fact, twenty-one specific references to bleeding and blood, divine or otherwise, in the text of *Parsifal*, to say nothing of the frequent mentions of wounds. The blood mostly belongs to Christ, and it flows miraculously into the Holy Grail, rejuvenating the Grail Knights who look after the holy relic in their castle. But something is wrong. Amfortas, the leader of the Grail community, is sick. He has been wounded in the genitals by the Holy Spear that pierced Christ's side on the cross. Years before, he was seduced by the schizophrenic *femme fatale* Kun-



dry, who, like a vampire—like the Flying Dutchman indeed—has been cursed to immortal life. In Kundry's case this was a punishment for a sin committed in a previous life when she laughed at the Saviour on his way to Calvary. Whilst in Kundry's arms, Amfortas was attacked by Klingsor, who struck him with the Holy Lance Amfortas had brought with him. Klingsor snatches the spear and now sets his sights on the Grail, which he wants for his own evil ends, and he uses Kundry to seduce the knights of the Grail from their true path.

It's not hard to discern a racial subtext to all this, which fits in well with Wagner's appallingly antisemitic essays written at the same time that he worked on the score, containing the most ravishing music ever composed by anyone—"Such welcome and unwelcome things at once,"

as Macbeth puts it. "Tis hard to reconcile." Not that Bram Stoker, in his much less offensive way, was immune to casual antisemitism himself. In *Dracula* he refers to "A Hebrew of rather the Adelphi theatre type, with a nose like a sheep, and a fez," (12) but this is a long way from wanting to burn a theatre full of Jews in a single evening.

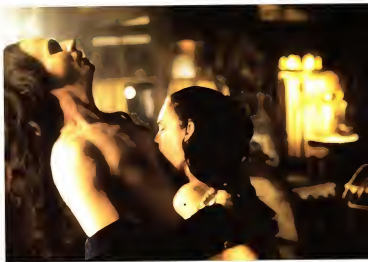
In *Parsifal*, Amfortas, due to his dalliance with Kundry, now suffers from a kind of spiritual syphilis. "The ebb of my own sinful blood in a mad tumult must surge back into me, to gush in wild terror into a world of sinful passion," is how he explains his situation in Wagner's flamboyantly macabre text. Compare that sense of impurity with Mina's reaction to the crucifix Van Helsing places against her forehead in Stoker's *Dracula*. Mina has also been polluted by mingling her

blood with Dracula's, and the result is similarly catastrophic:

... She put before her face her poor crushed hands, which bore on their whiteness the red mark of the Count's terrible grip, and from behind them came a low desolate wail which made the terrible scream seem only the quick expression of an endless grief. ... "Unclean, unclean! I must touch him [Harker, her husband] or kiss him no more. Oh, that it should be that it is I who am now his worst enemy." (13)

Mina and Amfortas are both guilty of having illicit sex with the wrong person—the racially degenerate type. The upstanding heroes of Stoker's novel (if that's quite the right way to put it) and the Grail Knights of Wagner's opera are, by contrast, sexually pure and desperate to remain that way.

**Mina and Amfortas are both guilty of having illicit sex with the wrong person—the racially degenerate type.**



Other vampire types prowled the surreal dream-text of *Parsifal*. The father of Amfortas, Titurel by name, is in a similar undead state to that of Stoker's arch vampire. Titurel is kept alive by fresh infusions of divine blood from the Holy Grail, but the woeful state of the Grail community means that this reservoir is drying up. In the end, even his undead state proves terminal in the impressive funeral march of Act III.

*Parsifal* also has examples of zombies in its cast list. Klingsor's magic garden is indeed guarded by them—slain Grail knights whom Klingsor has reanimated following a method that is presumably similar to that of John Carson's Squire Hamilton in Hammer's *The Plague of the Zombies* (1966). In fact, the entire cast list of *Parsifal* would not be out of place in a Hammer or Universal horror film. As Thomas Mann pointed out in his essay "The Sorrows and Grandeur of Richard Wagner":

[The] cast list of *Parsifal*—what a bizarre collection, at bottom! What an assemblage of extreme and repellent oddities! A sorcerer emasculated by his own hand; a desperate woman of split personality, half corrupter, half penitent Mary Magdalene, with cataleptic transitions between



these two states of being; a love-sick high priest ... together they remind one of that motley bunch of freaks packed into Achim von Arnim's famous coach—the ambivalent gypsy witch, the dead layabout the golem in female shape and the field marshal Cornelius Nepos, who is really a mandrake root grown beneath a gibbet." (14)

Klingsor's flower maidens, who soften up the hero, Parsifal, before Kundry gets to work on him, are also vampires in their

own way—certainly seductive *femmes fatales*. And listen to how Parsifal describes his encounter with Kundry, imagining as he does so, the experience of all her other conquests:

The lips—yes—they quivered for him, thus she bent her neck—thus boldly rose her head; thus laughingly fluttered her hair—thus her arms were twined around his neck—thus tenderly stroked her cheek!

Compare that with Jonathan Harker's equally kinky seduction by the vampire brides of *Dracula*:

The fair girl went on her knees, and bent over me, fairly gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. (15)

There is another connection between Wagner and Stoker: the curious coincidence that the Victorian actor-manager Sir Henry Irving, who was Stoker's rapacious employer, made something of a specialty of the role of the Flying Dutchman in a non-operatic version of the story at

the Lyceum Theatre. In his early plays for *Dracula*, Stoker intended Jonathan Harker to attend a performance of Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* at Munich's Hoftheater, before embarking on his journey to Transylvania. The fact that Stoker drew a parallel between Dracula and the Flying Dutchman—especially Wagner's treatment of it—suggests that a vampiric affinity between Dracula, Irving and Wagner existed in his imagination. Indeed, Irving himself intended to out-Wagner Wagner with regard to the scenic effects on display at the Lyceum Theatre, having heard about Wagner's successes in Germany. In 1900, Stoker and his wife even attended a performance of *Der fliegende Holländer* at Wagner's Festspielhaus in Bayreuth.

A footnote remains. If one consults the programme for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, issued in May 1903, one can read that the sets for Wagner's *Lohengrin* were designed by one Joseph Harter—the same Harter who was part of Irving's staff at the Lyceum. Why Stoker decided to call the hero of *Dracula* after this man's name is something of a mystery, but whatever Stoker had in mind, it certainly emphasises the Wagnerian resonance.

by David Huckvale

#### ENDNOTES

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## The PHANTOM of the OPERA™ and How the Love That 'Never Dies' Died

**S**WELLING MUSIC REVERBERATES around the subterranean vaults, Susanna Foster's Christine nervously edges towards Claude Rains's Claudin, and the mask is snatched away to reveal—"an unpleasant skin ailment," as one disappointed critic described it.

The film was Universal's *Phantom of the Opera* (1943), and it was my introduction to the story and to the horror-movie trope of disfigured faces. Give me acid scars, freakish facial distortions and flesh dripping off faces like fudge off a sundae. Rains's disfigurement, created by no less a master than Jack Pierce (*Frankenstein*, *The Wolf Man*), may not have been much more than a scab, but it was enough for this eight-year-old. In the coming years, I was to be equally excited by the scarred visages of Dinsdale Landon in *Rasputin*, the *Maid Monk* (1966), Alister Williamson in *The Oblong Box* (1969) and William Finley in *Phantom of the Paradise* (1974).

Around the time of my fascination with the film, Andrew Lloyd Webber brought his musical *The Phantom of the Opera* to the London stage, and my parents gifted me with the soundtrack album, no doubt having noticed my obsessive reworking of my favourite scenes from the 1943 version. Quarter of a century on, the show is still run-

ning in the West End and on Broadway, and has been seen in almost 150 cities worldwide.

*Phantom* was marketed from the beginning as a love story, as is obvious in the show's romance-laden logo, with its silvery text, elegant white mask and single red rose against a black background. But even the romance is tinged with horror, as the Phantom—in a number choreographed with startling sensuality—confesses to Christine that the darkness of his underground existence "heightens each sensation," "wakes imagination" and causes the senses to "abandon their defences." In other words, the darkness has made Lloyd Webber's Phantom desperate for sex in a way that would have shocked even Claud Rains's



Lon Chaney as *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925)



creepily incestuous Phantom.

Makeup artist Christopher Tucker had turned John Hurt into the Victorian sideshow freak of David Lynch's *The Elephant Man* (1980) and Terry Jones into the exploding fatty Mr Crocodile in Monty Python's *The Meaning of Life* (1983), and he was assigned the task of creating a new Phantom makeup to please connoisseurs of the acid-scar subgenre. (In Lloyd Webber's show, the Phantom had actually been deformed since childhood, but to an eight-year old, all such deformities fell under "acid scars.") The result was a Phantom with a florid, bulging lip; half a face covered with a mish-mash of contorted, discoloured recesses; and a crater on one side of the head, as if the skull had been smashed in with a blunt object.

The horror elements of *Phantom* didn't end with the makeup. The show is peppered with homages to old-school Gothic, with a number of nods to Universal's 1925 silent version. The Phantom wears a fedora and cloak, whose ominous shadow looms over helpless hallet girls; he escorts his captive soprano through an underground lake on a gondola; as the skull-faced, scarlet-robed Red Death, he interrupts the masked ball to descend the main staircase of the Paris Opera—all elements of Gaston Leroux's 1909 potboiler, but images that owe their iconic status almost solely to the Lon

Chaney film. There are also torture devices, *Grand Guignol*-style hangings and spectacular illusions, designed by TV magician Paul Daniels.

For years, Lloyd Webber talked of a sequel. He and novelist Frederick Forsyth (*The Day of the Jackal*) were set to collaborate on *The Phantom of Manhattan*, but despite dozens of rounds of chat shows in the '90s, the partnership fizzled. Eventually, in 2010, a sequel arrived in *Love Never Dies*, with a hook by lefite comic Ben Elton (incorporating bits of Forsyth) and lyrics by Disney songwriter Glenn Slater. While there was no doubting the humbleness of the tunes, entrusting the lyrics to a man whose biggest success to date was essentially a singing seafood chorus in *The Little Mermaid* proved a major mistake.

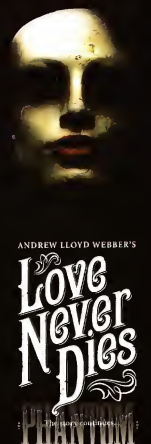
*Love Never Dies* takes the Phantom to New York's Coney Island, where he creates a hedonistic paradise full of vaudeville and circus freaks, but his one real desire is to be reunited with Christine and have her sing his music once again. There is lots of melodrama but little of the original show's Gothic horror, and the overwhelming sentiment is worthy of a Hallmark greetings card—"Who knows when love begins? Who knows what makes it start? One day it's simply there, alive inside your heart." Ariel the Mermaid might get away with such maudlin lyrics, but this is not of the same dark, fantastical world that mesmerized me in 1986.

The critics agreed. The blog "West End Whingers" gained infamy after dubbing the show *Paint Never Dries*. Poor ticket sales saw Lord Lloyd Webber firing director Jack O'Brien and shutting down the show to revamp it, but on reopening, it was too late, and the London production closed in August, 2011, after less than 18 months. The Broadway opening has been indefinitely delayed. The Australian production, which ran in Melbourne for a few months before moving to Sydney for a limited run, was moderately successful, and was filmed for posterity. Unfortunately, the DVD (released in April) only confirms the flaccid nature of the show. In a sure sign that horror was the last thing

from the makers' minds, we don't even get to see the Phantom's disfigured face: There are a couple of unmaskings, but we only get to watch from behind.

My inner eight-year-old was deflated by this disregard for the more traditional horror elements of the Phantom legend, and an internet trove of a few blurry photos illicitly snapped at a live performance have had to suffice. The new makeup is surprisingly grisly, but it is still too little to redeem a very plodding sequel. *Love Never Dies* only highlights how skillfully the original show did justice to the full-blooded horror potential of *The Phantom of the Opera*.

by David L Rattigan



Jess Franco's

# Count Dracula

Maybe You Know Him...



AN  
ENGLISHMAN'S  
GUIDE TO  
ITALIAN GOTHIC

'A SPANISH/GERMAN/ITALIAN  
CO-PRODUCTION'



**B**Y 1969, BRAM Stoker's most celebrated creation had appeared in dozens, if not hundreds, of films, some loosely based on the novel from whence he came, some so wildly divergent that they almost beggar belief. *Billy the Kid vs. Dracula* (1966), anyone? However, while Tod Browning's 1931 version and Terence Fisher's 1958 colour revamp (sorry) did the job of defining the character for millions of moviegoers around the world, even they were a long, long way from depicting the character as he appeared in the source material: as "a tall old man, clean-shaven save for a long white moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a speck of colour about him anywhere." The widow's peak and dashing silk-lined cape of Bela Lugosi defined the look of the character and to a large extent they still do, with this likeness even today appearing on the covers of some reissues of the novel and, of course, in the form of a million dime

store Halloween costumes.

That other iconic Dracula, Christopher Lee, had by this point played the character in three highly successful Hammer outings, and, as a long-time admirer and expert when it came to all things Stoker, the actor publicly declared on several occasions that he desired only to play the character "exactly as Stoker described him" in an adaptation of the novel exactly as it appeared on the page. Enter British producer Harry Alan Towers and 'love him/hate him' Spanish director Jesús 'Jess' Franco (born Jesús Franco Manera), who

**"A tall old man, clean-shaven save for a long white moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a speck of colour about him anywhere."**



Jesús Franco

approached him with this very proposition. Lee had worked with Franco before on several occasions, and Towers on three of these films—namely two slapdash but mildly diverting *Fu Manchu* sequels ('68 and '69) and the sublime sleaze masterpiece *Eugenie... the Story of Her Journey into Perversion* ('70).

While the resultant opus would indeed allow Lee to represent the character visually as described in Stoker's novel, it would also, like previous versions, take enormous liberties in its adaptation of





his admittedly already somewhat broken-backed and awkward narrative. Nevertheless, it would be the closest yet, making it, as Donald F. Glut puts it in his 1975 *The Dracula Book*, "of extreme importance in the history of the *Dracula* film." Sadly, it would also be, for the most part, a bit of a damp squib.

A Spanish/West German/Italian co-production, *Count Dracula* (*El Conde Drácula*, 1970) was filmed in Barcelona, Alicante and Munich with the interiors shot at Barcelona's Estudios Cinematográficos Balcázar. Scripted by Towers under his oft-used pseudonym 'Peter Welbeck', it opens, like the novel, with trainee lawyer Jonathan Harker (as played by Munich-born Friedrich Wilhelm 'Fred Williams' Löcherer) catching a train to Bistritz from Munich. A fellow passenger (not in the

novel) is alarmed to hear who his client is – "Maybe you know him... Count Dracula". That said, said fellow passenger's face remains completely stony throughout this exchange, in time-honoured Jess Franco fashion, so his alarm has to be communicated via another Franco mainstay; an extremely clumsy zoom-to-close-up.

Despite this, the opening is reasonable enough, drenched as it is in pseudo-Eastern European atmosphere just like its literary source. Although hampered by some utterly unconvincing day-for-night shooting and German Shepherds standing in for wolves, the scene wherein Dracula's carriage takes Harker across the mist-shrouded woodland of the Borgo Pass stands as one of the eeriest and best cinematic depictions of this iconic sequence.

Also of note, mostly for its almost absolute fidelity to Stoker's novel, is where Harker arrives at the castle and for the first time (knowingly) meets the Count (Lee of course). True to their words, Franco and Towers have allowed Lee's appearance to be as described in the passage cited above, although, unlike in the novel, his eyebrows are not "very massive, almost meeting over the nose". Soon after we have the pleasure of hearing the actor deliver a condensed, reordered version of the lengthy monologue from the novel wherein Dracula speaks of "one of my own race who [...] crossed the Danube and beat the Turk on his own ground." Apparently, this was not in Towers' original script: "I did at least manage to get a bit of one of the great speeches in," says Lee in an online interview with M.J.

Simpson, "because I insisted. And I did at least—and I think it's the only time it's ever happened—portray the character exactly as Stoker described him." Again, not quite *exactly*, but certainly the nearest yet. For the first time in a cinematic version, Dracula appears younger as the narrative progresses, as he does in the novel and in the later Francis Ford Coppola version.

According to Franco (when interviewed in 1996 for the late, lamented *European Trash Cinema*), Lee was far from the warmest personality he'd ever worked with: "At first I thought he was a great professional, a very good actor, serious, knowing his lines perfectly; but, just like the Hammer films which he was often in, he was cold, he was distant, there was a wall between him and me. You know?" However, the British actor is kinder to the controversial and insanely prolific Spanish director, stating (in the M.J. Simpson interview) that, "I think he's under-rated, I've always said so, because he's not just a hack director. It's always a question of material; the same thing applies to actors." Perhaps it was simply a case of cultural misunderstanding on Franco's part—if any Brit actor could be said to display a 'stiff upper lip' then Lee would be a prime contender.

Dracula's famous antagonist, Van Helsing, is here played by Herbert Lom, who would also appear with Lee in Franco's *The Bloody Judge* (*El proceso de las brujas*) that same year. However, for this film, the two actors would never actually



Herbert Lom as Prof. Van Helsing



**Lee on Franco:**

"I think he's under-rated, I've always said so, because he's not just a hack director. It's always a question of material."



**"Kinski was tricked into appearing in the movie by Towers and Franco, who slipped him a fake script bearing no mention of Renfield or the Count whatsoever."**

meet despite having scenes together. As with many international productions of the day, the name stars were flown in for a couple of days, but not necessarily at the same time if the gaps in their schedules didn't coincide exactly. And it must be said that, while Lom is a fine actor, his performance never rises above the merely serviceable here.

Making the cast even more impressive—at least on paper—is the presence of iconoclastic German nuthag Klaus Kinski, essaying the role of Renfield, billed above Lom. In another deviation from the novel, the character has no dialogue whatsoever, one suspects due mostly to the fact that, being no fan of Dracula or horror movies in general, Kinski was tricked into appearing in the movie by Towers and Franco, who slipped him a fake script bearing no mention of Renfield or the Count whatsoever. As one might expect, he's suitably deranged in the role, insisting on eating real flies for added verisimilitude and looking like he's having a whale of a time doing so. As Tim Lucas puts it (in *Video Watchdog* #121), "Unlike Dwight Frye, he doesn't 'play' mad; he simply *is* mad." Of course, Kinski himself would appear in Stoker's milieu again, as the Count himself in Werner Herzog's beautiful *Nosferatu* remake (1979) and Augusto Caminito's bizarre-but-not-very-good pseudo-sequel, *Vampire in Venice* (*Nosferatu a Venezia*, 1988).

The usually pivotal roles of Mina Harker and Lucy Westenra are essayed by Maria Rohm (Towers' wife, who had also appeared in *Eugenie* and *The Blood of Fu*



*Manchu*) and tragic beauty Soledad Miranda (who would die in a car crash in the same year, aged 27) respectively; although in this version they seem to very much take a back seat to the male characters, becoming absolutely interchangeable in the process. Franco and Eurohorror mainstays Jack Taylor and Paul Müller (also both *Eugenie* alumni) are also present and correct, in the roles of Quincey Morris and Doctor Seward. However, Morris here is not the romanticised American we read about in Stoker's novel; here the character has been merged with Arthur Holmwood / Lord Godalming, and Taylor, himself an American actor, is dubbed in clipped British tones. Seward has been similarly demoted, becoming simply an employee of Van Helsing, who is now director of the asylum instead of the eccentric doctor called in from Holland we know from the source text. Whilst such alterations are understandable in the name of narrative economy, here they do nothing at all in aid of the film's cause. The fact that 'London' looks unmistakably Spanish doesn't help either.

The Count's famous passage to England on the *Demeter*, another pivotal part

of the novel, is completely excised, presumably because the budget didn't allow for it, having already been largely blown on the array of acting talent in attendance. A scene from the novel that does make the cut, where our team of vampire hunters seek Dracula at his new home of Carfax Abbey, is nothing short of laughable, with Franco going zoom crazy on a collection of stuffed animals for reasons known only to himself, and the less said about the 'opera scene', the better. It's appallingly handled.

The score from the often excellent Bruno Nicolai is effective on occasion, with a pleasing mandolin motif, but is on the whole far too repetitive to be of note. The workmanlike editing is by another Bruno—the late Bruno Mattei, later to become infamous as the hack director of such atrocities as *S.S. Experiment Love Camp* (1976), *Hell of the Living Dead* (1980) and *Rats: Night of Terror* (1984). The film also suffers badly from a wet fart of an ending that has the titular villain far too easily despatched, although this is a criticism that one could perhaps just as easily level at some of the later Hammer outings. Ultimately, aside from a gener-

ally pleasing first 25 minutes and great (if hampered) performances from Lee and Kinski, *Count Dracula* emerges as an irreparably dull affair, a well-meaning but resounding failure. Franco's 'sexedelic' *Vampyros Lesbos*, released in the following year and also starring Miranda and Müller, would be a hell of a lot more fun, and the BBC's 1977 attempt bearing the same title (with Louis Jordan in the title role), although taking similar liberties, would be by far the superior adaptation of Stoker's classic.

In issue 19 of *Little Shoppe of Horrors*, Colin Cowie fondly recalls viewing Franco's film with none other than Terence Fisher himself at a convention: "When it finished he turned to Sue (Cowie's wife) with a conspirator's grin and said, "For the first ten minutes I thought, my God, it's better than mine—and then I thought no it's not!" And Fisher was right, of course. However, when Franco declared (in the



Klaus Kinski as Renfield

E.T.C. interview cited earlier) that, "I think my treatment of the book is much more close to the spirit of Bram Stoker than Coppola's", in some ways, so was he.

by Rob Talbot





it hopes—or very carefully calculates, rather—to be exactly the right-sized minority one: one small enough to share its pretensions and animosities, but still large enough to make that all-important return on the investment. Cult longevity is an incidental bonus, which is not to say it is not being consciously striven for (and rarely as consciously, painfully so, as here).

Yet everything here is as artificial as the blandest superhero caper. A supposedly geeky, ugly teenage school misfit, played by an obviously older, knowingly hotter actress, is given one-liners and putdowns that are simply not in the rhythm of a real teenager, and a parade of tailor's-dummy straw men to bounce them against; it is a grotesquely unreal charade of a movie. Of course, debuting director Richard Bates, Jr. hasn't the resources to take on the megabucks movies on their own turf, but this is George Galloway filmmaking: shrewdly pitched, calculated to be noticed, and lousy with hubris.

The packaging of angst and outrage as counter-mainstream cultural gesture is nothing new, and nor is it especially noble, despite its seemingly limitless entitlement to the benefit of the critical doubt. Its bravery is a pose: it's actually shrewder—and safer—in the long term, tactically, than the *Avengers* gambit, which risks all on a single throw of the die before an audience whose fickleness and volatility is shown over and over. The mainstream may be bovine, but it is far from docile: the masses will reject, seemingly on a whim, countless equally ingratiating offers, entirely indistinguishable from those they choose to embrace.

*The Avengers* is given wholesale, take it or leave it, to its intended audience, but with not a hundredth of its advertising outlay and cultural reach, it is essential that a film like *Excision* reaches the consciousness of those who will hate it every bit as much as those who will love it. The former, for whom *The Avengers* will be at most a billboard half-noted from the window of a passing train, can incite the latter into ever more exaggerated loyalty,

AS EVERYONE KNOWS, behind the white picket fences of WASP America dwell thousands of articulate, creative teenagers, rendered dangerous misfits by the absurd prejudices and standards of their repressive parents, schools and communities.

It's only a matter of time before they start experiencing weird hallucinations, in which esoteric sexual fantasy is mingled with the aestheticizing of death

and bloodshed. Then, from here, it is the shortest of steps to bizarre sexual experimentation and do-it-yourself lung transplants in the two-car garage.

Further, when this does happen, it's simultaneously not their fault and, yet, kind of cool. That, I think, is the message of *Excision*, but stop me if you've heard it a few thousand times before.

First rule of niche-market filmmaking: know your constituency. While a major release like *The Avengers* tailors its shopfront to the fantasies of the majority, one like *Excision* aims at what



if you play them right.

The audience *Excision* is going for is vastly easier to manipulate than the supposedly robotic multiplex mainstream. The temptation to praise films like this, purely on the grounds that they are just that little bit more nihilistic and gross than the previous one, and to mistake such things for thematic seriousness, is seemingly irresistible, and early reviews seem inclined to yield to just that temptation. Yes, it's weird(ish), squalid(ish) and confrontational(ishywish), and apparently that's half the battle won, if not all.

But it's also *terrible*: aridly uninteresting, wearily predictable and one-dimensional, crassly keen to annoy a supposed bourgeois consensus that was surely put down years ago. The narrative develops in an endless succession of short, pinched, restrictively written and over-rehearsed scenes, each one a tiny oil painting of lifeless functionality, interspersed here and there with juvenile provocation. But no amount of shrill posturing, tampon-sniffing or fantasy abortion sequences can disguise the poverty of its ideas or the mechanistic predictability of its construction.

Still, by all means roll up, roll up, if what you crave is yet another lashing-together of teen angst and horror themes; if you want to see the first ten minutes of *Ginger Snaps* stretched into an entire movie or *Donnie Darko* shamelessly cribbed, in style and structure and even, in one giveaway rip-off sequence, in actual construction. (Let me know if you spot it, and if you agree that the doctor putting the foetus into the oven in the abortion fantasy sequence is deliberately made up to look like Mal Arnold in *Blood Feast*.)

As predictable as the plot and tone are the rogues gallery of usual suspect cameos: Malcolm McDowell, John Waters, Ray Wise; none of them given anything much to do beyond honour us with their presence. Traci Lords is up to the job of playing the nasty mother, but she's hardly stretched by the précis-level dialogue and characterisation.

Presumably plaudits are even now

being polished, ready for flinging at AnnaLynne McCord in the lead, but it's a performance that's pitched at cartoon level from the start. Too dysfunctional, seemingly, even to walk in a straight line, Pauline is a ridiculous character, and one given the grotesque, contorted overplaying it merits.

There is something deeply dishonest about films like this. They purport to speak unaffectedly to the sensibilities of a generation younger than their creators, and yet in truth are exactly like the film's own clueless Christian counsellor (played by Waters): attempting not so much to blur the distinction between adult and adolescent sensibilities as deny its existence, as if they have access to the perceptions of two generations simultaneously.

There's no obvious reason I can think of why a bunch of film school graduates saying, "I know how you feel," to the Columbine sensibility is any less patronising than a school counsellor do-

ation with the will to dismember will woo those who already worship at the same altars, and need no such commercials.

The shock sequences, then, are basically oxymoronic, for whom are they intended to shock, exactly? Not the grown-ups and the straights, presumably, because they're already excluded from all right of access to the film's point of view. But is its intended audience supposed to find it shocking? If so, how can it be said to speak to them authentically?

In truth this is a film for exactly the kinds of people that it is *by*, and for an eager critical fraternity that will not recognise the difference between legitimate and cynical forms of provocation.

While it claims to speak to disaffection, what it really ennobles is affectation; certainly not authentic social alienation—which God knows must be alienated by anything as cunningly oleaginous as this. It is not merely oppositional but *disinfecting*, and yet its presumed target



ing so, except insofar as they have taken the easy route of pandering to an inchoate worldview rather than analysing it. And so they set up the usual shooting gallery of caricatures—repressive or ineffectual parents, condescending clergy, high school principals with pictures of Reagan and Bush on their office walls, and worst of all those hateful conformist *normal* kids—and dress such idle fantasy as social comment. In truth, this is the mere fetishising of youthful resentment; a kind of pornography of disenchantment, slyly confident that its equation of social alien-

ation is about as vital as the dead bird our heroine splits open in anticipation of the big climax that somewhere, perhaps, a single viewer might not see coming.

A great film must possess the capacity to convert the unwilling. This will have its disciples, I don't doubt, but the crudeness of its tone and gestures risks the alienation even of the initially well-disposed.

by Matthew Coniam





## The Glass Bead

• • •

IT WAS DARK. They sat, all five of them, in a circle in the middle of the warm brown darkness, not too close, not too far apart. Leonhardt was later than usual, and this fact tied a thick red rope of fear around them. Any kind of change in the routine brought with it this strangulation, this numbing silence.

"She may have fallen in the woods," said Donleavy. "She is getting old. Maybe it was her time today."

"Nonsense," spluttered Poma, chewing on a sweet, white leaf. "Leonhardt is still bleeding regularly."

They took hold of each other's hands without anyone suggesting it, and began to chant the evening songs before food. Even though the meal was not forthcoming with its venerable purveyor, they calmed themselves with the soft hum of their gentle voices.

The whistling bugs inside the cave joined with those outside, and soon the swelling noise drowned out the humans. Moonlight sailed in through the opening, and still they sat. No sign of food, and no one to welcome home with their weekly sustenance.

"We need sleep now," Poma said wearily. "It will be a long night of rumbling bellies. This has not happened for a long time and some of you do not know the meaning of hunger. She rose stiffly and went to the edge of the cave where she took some tightly rolled blankets and began to unfold them against the walls. Reluctantly the others rose and shuffled to their woolen beds. Soon all living creatures were asleep. Except for the sliver of moonlight that reached into the cave and probed for assurances of life with its thin fingers, all was darkness.

The next morning there was no sign of the food purveyor, so they shuffled about in their long, brown robes and filed down to the river to wash. They ran delicate, long fingers through their wet

hair until it was almost dry. They sang, each a private song, and when they felt satisfied and happy with the prospects of a new day, they sauntered off in different directions.

Donleavy, a young one still, ran up to Poma and fell into step with her.

"Are we never to speak of Leonhardt again?"

Poma was tall and angular and had very long legs, and even though she was not young, she could make it difficult for Donleavy to keep up with her; but she had no need to be unkind this morning, and besides, she had always been the missing one's best friend.

"We may speak of her, but only with gratitude, never bitterness or disappointment."

"Who made up that rule?"

"Those who made up all our rules.

The wise ones. The pioneers."

"May we try to break a rule?"

"It's been tried a thousand times over the years, and is just a waste of time. In the end you will see the wisdom of the ages is always tried and true."

Donleavy did not like that answer, but she followed her mentor in silence through the forest. Poma broke a long stick from a branch and began to peel the bark from it. Seeing the younger one looking at the stick with envy, she gave it to her and got another one, which she peeled in the same manner. Now the two of them sat cross-legged in the woods, stripping the bark from the sticks until they each had a long, white, smooth, shiny instrument.

"I'm first," Poma said. "You'll do me after."

She pulled the robe from the young one's back and began to stroke ever so softly at first, but with each whip the force grew steadily, until Donleavy's back was raw with stripes. She never cried out or winced, but kept her eyes staring at one spot she had chosen at the start, without

wavering. In fact, it is safe to say there was even a small spark of pleasure burning in the center of her eyes as the wind, whistling through the reed, whipped the air on its way to the tender target.

"Now me." Poma pulled her own robe down around her strong calves.

Donleavy repaid her in kind. They fell on their backs wincing and laughing together. They rolled about playfully, and then, when Poma rose to run to the river to wash the blood from her body, Donleavy scurried along behind her.

Ramirez was sitting waist-deep at the edge of the river holding a glass bead up to the light and away from her face. She laughed when she saw them. "You just missed it, all the fun."

"I don't think so," Donleavy said, scooping water into her voluptuous mouth.

"I just saw somebody get killed."

The three of them drew closer together.

"Yes," Ramirez continued as she swallowed the bead, "Leonhardt was running right there at the edge of the river, over there on that side, and she tripped and the animal ground her into little pieces and ate her."

No one spoke. It was the custom to maintain a long silence when hearing bad news.

Later that day Poma called everyone to assembly. "It is time to elect a new food purveyor. Call everyone else in."

White Dahlia was the most likely candidate. It was her turn. She was just beginning to grow breasts, and her legs were strong and lithe. Leonhardt had taught her everything about the land, and she knew the safe trails and interiors of caves that lined the beach. She could find the small animals and could kill quietly.

The next evening they sat in a circle eating the meat White Dahlia brought them.

by Joan Johnson



## Our Contributors...



**David Del Valle** is a journalist, columnist, film historian, and a radio & television commentator on the horror/science-fiction/cult & fantasy film genres. He has contributed to magazines internationally and has been interviewed by the BBC, A & E Network, Channel 4 (London) and The Sci-Fi Channel. He produced and hosted a series of television interviews entitled *Sinister Image*. His guests ran the gamut from Cameron Mitchell to Russ Meyer.



**Jay McRoy** is Associate Professor of English and Cinema Studies at the University of Wisconsin - Parkside. He is the author of *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema* (Rodopi, 2007), the editor of *Japanese Horror Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2005), and co-editor (with Richard Hand) of *Monstrous Adaptations: Generic and Thematic Mutations in Horror Film* (Manchester University Press, 2007).



**Drew Beard** is a Ph.D candidate in English at the University of Oregon, where he is completing his dissertation, investigating manifestations and negotiations of family trauma in paranormal reality television. He has contributed to *Scope*, *GLQ*, and the *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*, and is currently co-editing a collection of essays, *Where Horror Dwells: Locating Horror across Media Landscapes*.



**Matthew Coniam** is a writer from Bath, England. When he was eight, his Super-8 projector began his growing interest in cinema, and his eclectic tastes in film now range from Pete Walker to the Marx Brothers. Matthew has written extensively about Hammer horror, philosophy, Dennis Wheatley, and wine.



**Joan Eyles Johnson**, lives in Hollywood, and is an award-winning writer who teaches literature and creative writing at Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles; her plays have been produced off-Broadway and elsewhere; her stories and poems have appeared in literary journals, *Ambit*, *The Mediterranean Review* and in the anthology, *Scream When You Burn*.



**Dr David Huckvale** is a freelance author and academic who teaches film music at Birmingham University, UK. Among his best-known works are *James Bernard: Composer to Count Dracula* (2006), *Hammer Film Scores and the Musical Avant-Garde* (2008) and *Taughtstones of Gothic Horror: A Film Genealogy of Eleven Motifs and Images* (2010). He is currently preparing his next book, on the place of ancient Egypt in the popular imagination.



**Michele 'Izzy' Galgana** is a freelance writer and film festival programmer. She was seduced by the velvety voice of Vincent Price during her toddler years. She has curated films for the Boston Underground Film Festival, Boston Science Fiction Film Festival, All Things Horror Online screening nights, and has written for *Rue Morgue Magazine* and *All Things Horror Online*.



**Rob Talbot** is a regular contributor to 'superblog' *'Italian Film Review'* and UK-based print horror film magazine *Scream*. He maintains his own blog, *'Mondo Euro'* while finishing his first horror novel. Holding a first class degree in English Literature, he works by day, and often night too, as Events and Marketing Co-ordinator for a busy arts venue (with adjoining real ale pub) where he has also recently started hosting screenings of Eurocult films.



**Robert J.E. Simpson** is the overworked and underpaid editor of *Diabolique* magazine. When not contributing to your favourite magazine he works as a film historian, writer, and broadcaster based in Belfast. He recently threw away a career in libraries for a stint as an independent publisher ([www.avalardpublishing.com](http://www.avalardpublishing.com)). His personal website is [www.avalard.co.uk](http://www.avalard.co.uk)



**David L. Rattigan** is a British-Canadian freelance writer with interests ranging from religion, film, and language. His published writing includes *Leaving Fundamentalism* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008, ed. G. Elijah Dann), and articles for *Third Way* magazine and *The Guardian's Comment is Free* website. He shares his love of Hammer horror at [DictionaryofHammer.com](http://DictionaryofHammer.com)

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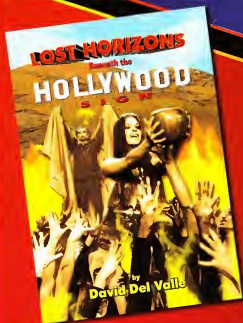
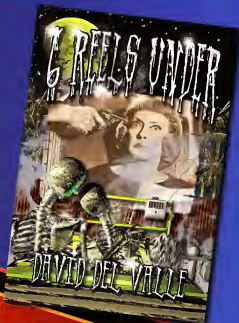
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